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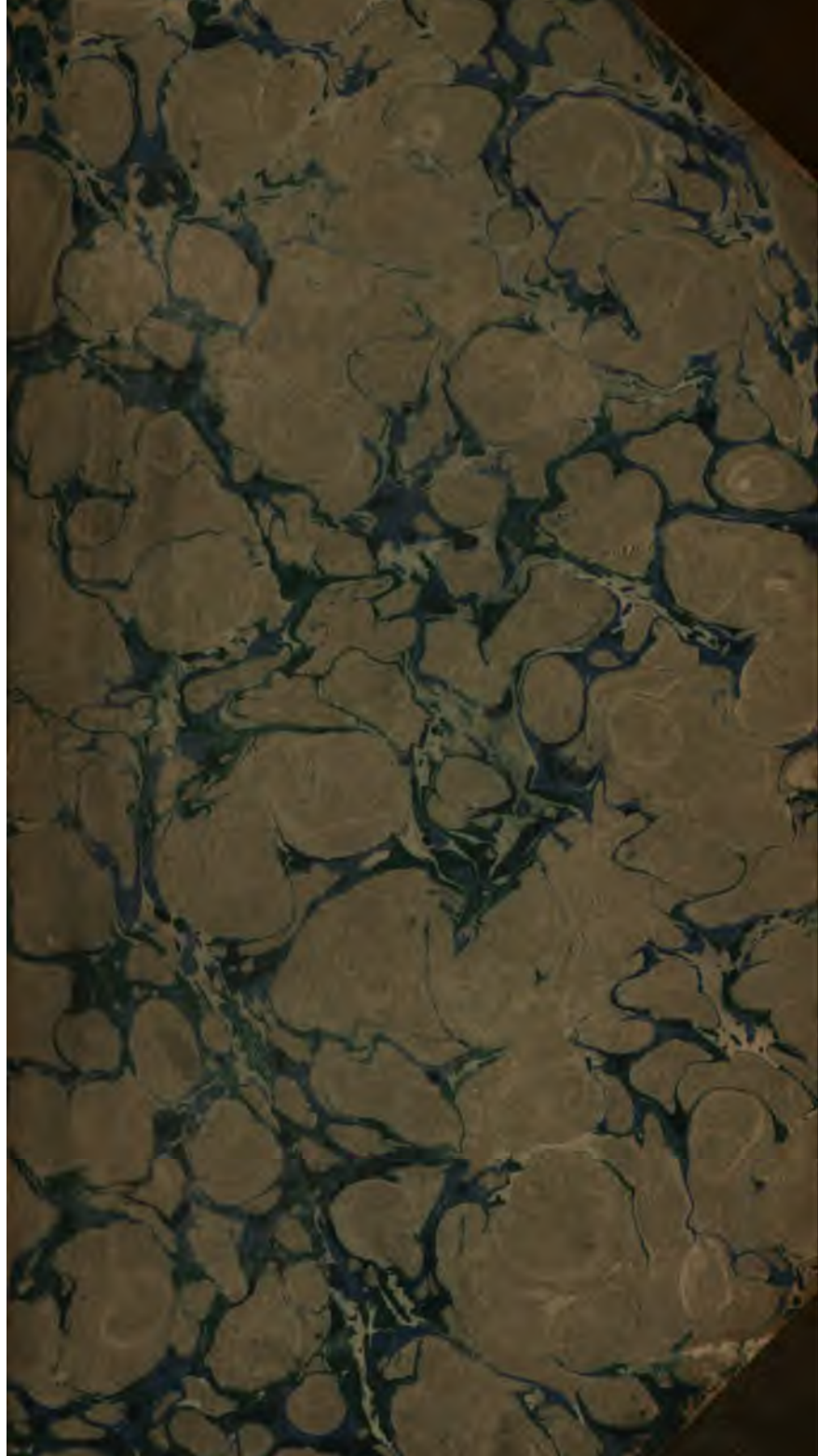
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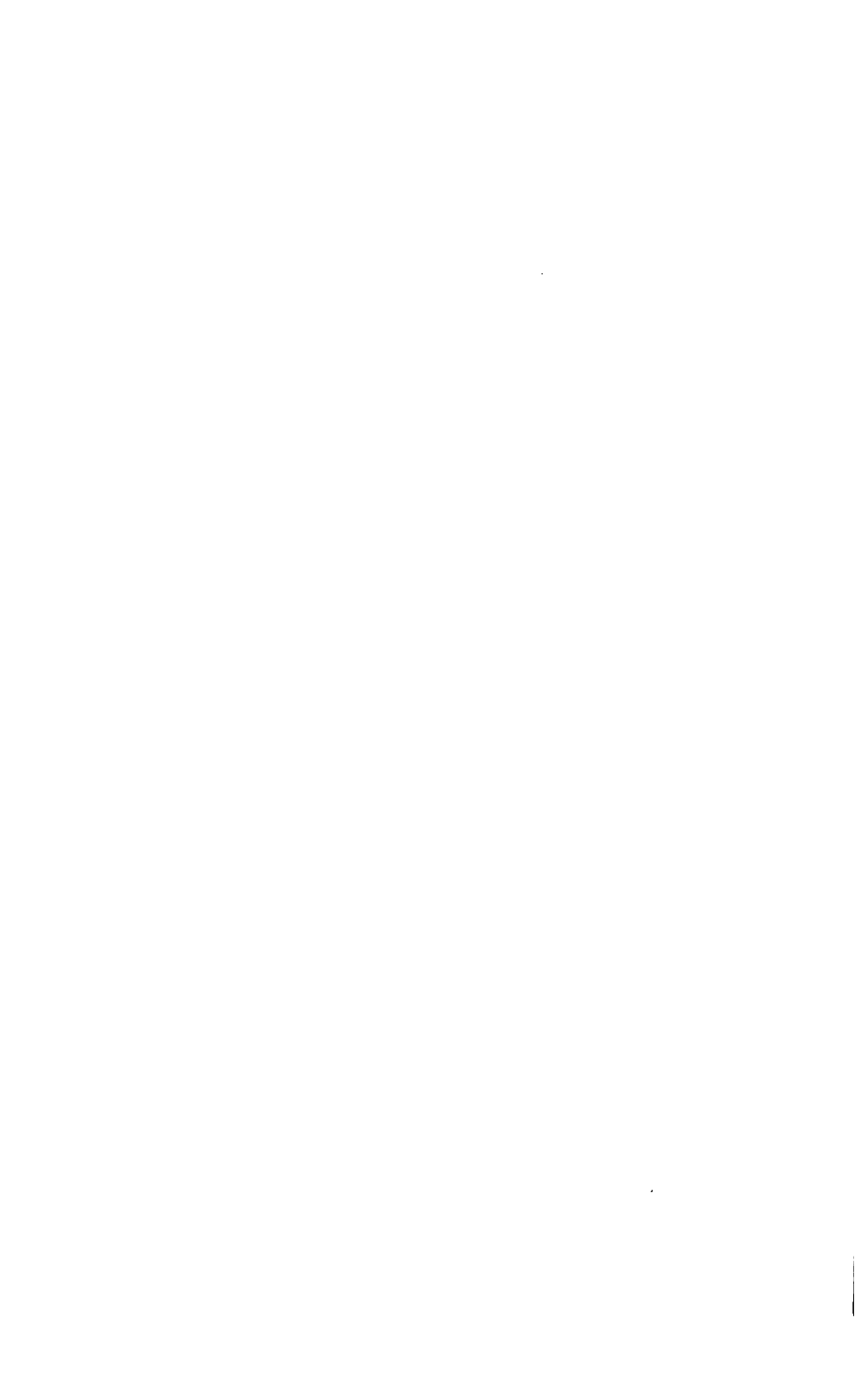
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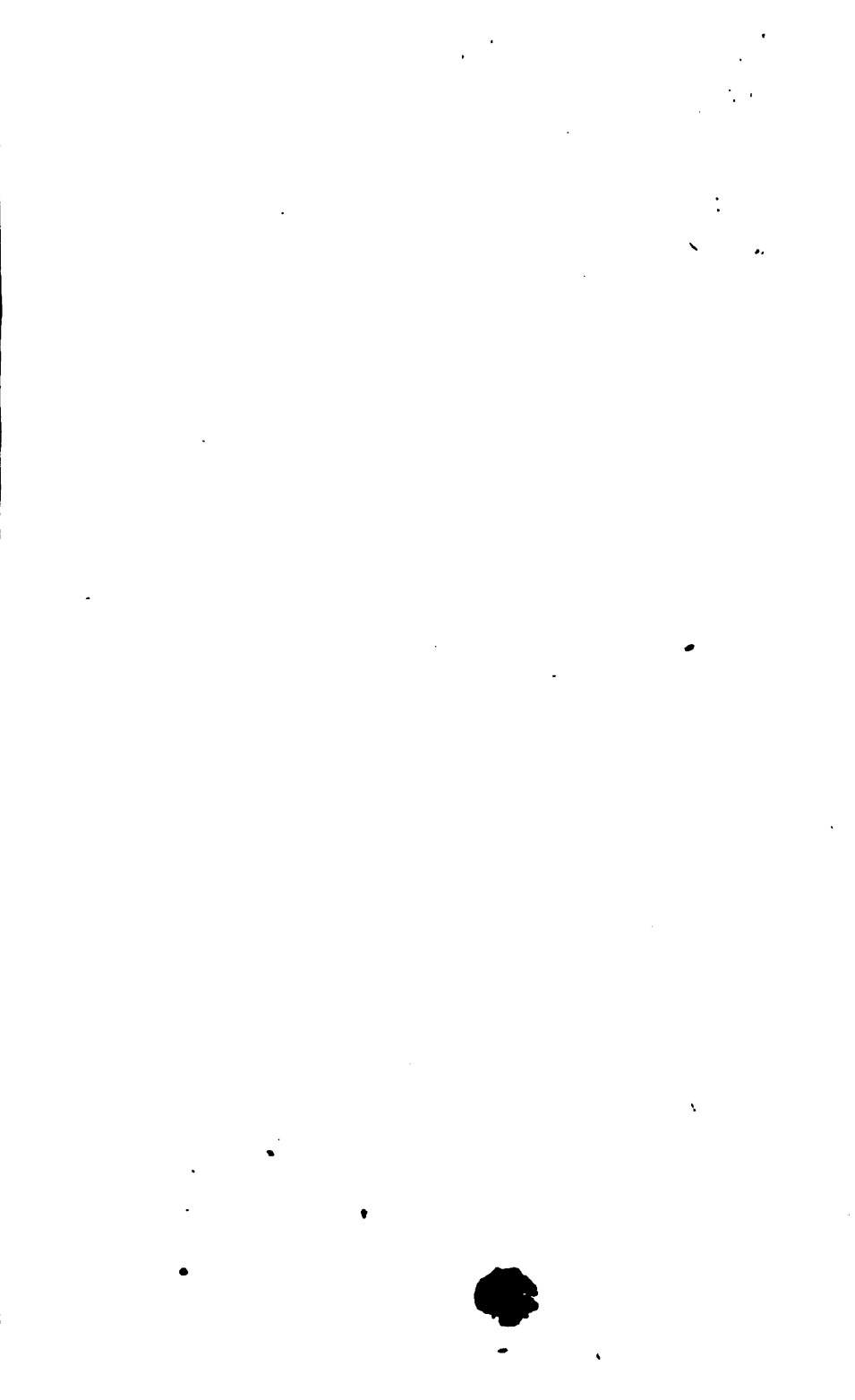


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Stephen Brown Bathe, M. A.,  
Balliol, Rector of Rushbury.  
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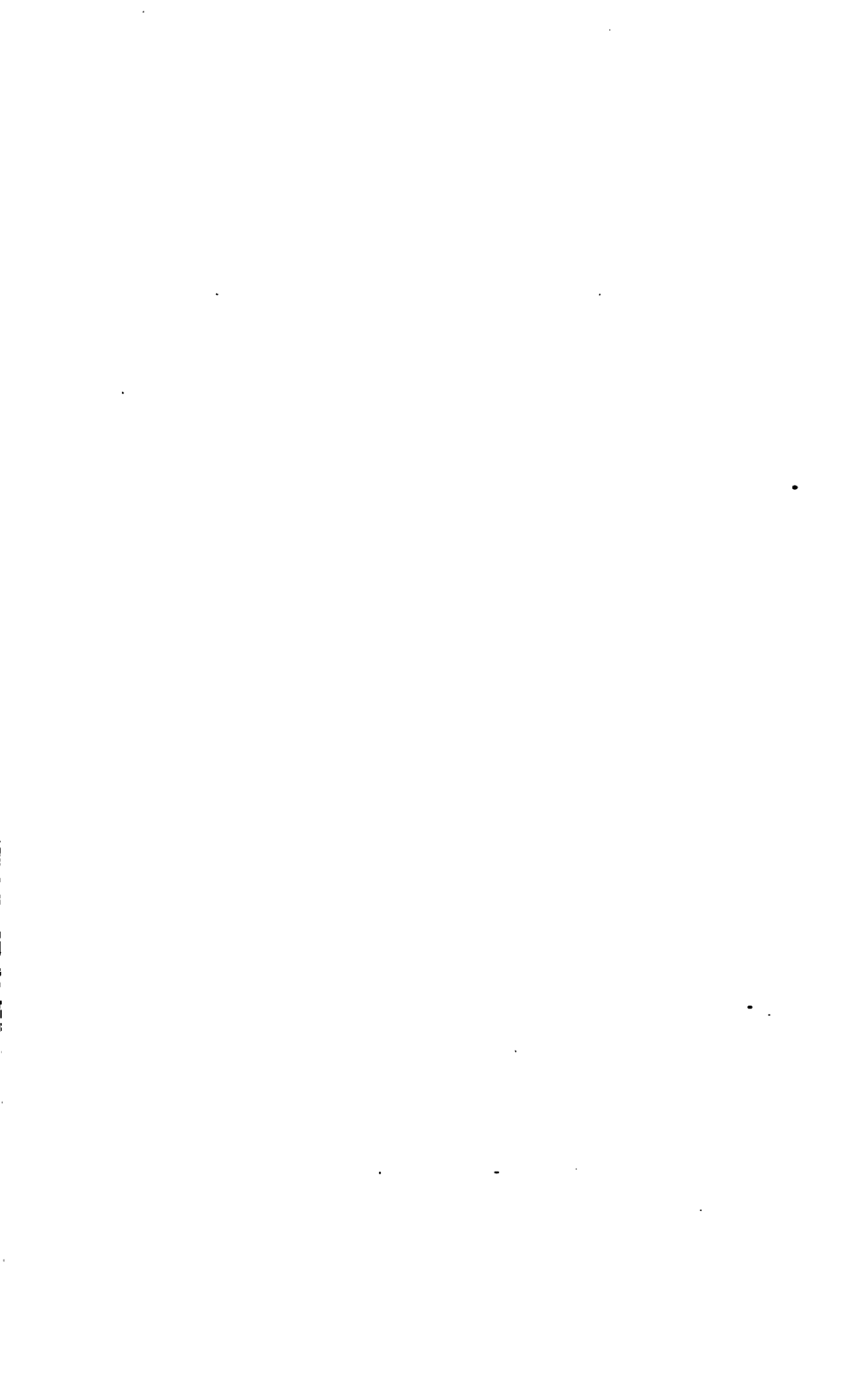












# EXPOSITORY NOTES

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

ON

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

OF OUR

LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,

WHEREIN THE

SACRED TEXT IS AT LARGE RECITED,

THE SENSE EXPLAINED, AND THE INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLE OF THE BLESSED  
JESUS, AND HIS HOLY APOSTLES, TO OUR IMITATION RECOMMENDED.

THE WHOLE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE THE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES IN  
PRIVATE FAMILIES, AND TO RENDER THE DAILY PERUSAL OF  
THEM PROFITABLE AND DELIGHTFUL.

BY WILLIAM BURKITT, M. A.

LATE VICAR AND LECTURER OF DEDHAM, IN ESSEX.

VOL. I.

LONDON :

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MDCCCXXXII.





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*Right Hon. and Right Rev. Father in God, HENRY, LORD  
BISHOP OF LONDON, one of her Majesty's most Honourable  
Privy Council.*

*My LORD,*

**I**F ever my mean labours were a blessing to the people of *my charge*, I with them, and they with me, have abundant cause to bless Almighty God for your Lordship, who was the immediate instrument of my coming amongst them.

And we jointly lie under superadded obligations to your Lordship, for repeated instances of respect to this poor town in general, and to myself in particular, in an allowance for one to assist the minister of this place, in that great work which is here daily incumbent upon him.

I think myself therefore obliged, both in duty and gratitude, to give your Lordship an account how I have spent my time here, (especially since I have had help by your Lordship's particular favour;) which has been employed, as I could redeem it, in an endeavour to render the reading of the New Testament profitable and delightful to my people, both in their families and private apartments.

In which undertaking my care has been, to be as clear and particular as I could, with an eye to the benefit of the plain and unlearned reader; and have suited things, as far as their nature would bear, and my skill would reach, to the most ordinary capacities and vulgar apprehensions.

And whatever the success may be, I hope I shall receive the reward of an honest endeavour from Him, who estimates our pains, not by their events, which are not in our power, but by their natural tendencies, and our sincere intentions.

My Lord, controversies are here industriously declined, as inconsistent with my chief design; yet not so as knowingly to betray any text, or wilfully to deliver up truth into the hands of its avowed enemies, whether *Papists* or *Socinians*.

Against the contagious corruptions of the former, and the more refined subtleties, yet no less pernicious errors, of the latter, the clergy of this diocese have been happily antidoted by your Lordship, at your frequent conferences with them. And the great freedom and condescension with which your Lordship is pleased at such times to treat us, doth at once *invite* and *oblige* us also, upon all occasions, publicly and gratefully to acknowledge it.

Yea, to your Lordship's lasting honour, and everlasting *comfort*, be it spoken, that not only your own *clergy*, but these three nations, are inexpressibly indebted, for your Lordship's pious care, in instructing in the holy principles of our established religion, the glorious Queen *MARY* of immortal memory, and her illustrious sister our most august Queen *ANNE*, when your Lordship had the honour to wait upon them in their tender years: from whence her Majesty has been so zealous to run all hazards for its preservation ever since.

May heaven long, very long, continue your Lordship an ornament to the church, an honour to the English nobility, a patron of refugees for the sake of religion, a pattern of sincere piety towards God, and of the most extensive charity to all mankind: and after many holy and happy days here on earth, crown your Lordship with the rewards of a glorious immortality. So prayeth, in great sincerity,

*My LORD,*

*Your Lordship's much obliged and most obedient Servant,*

W. BURKITT.

To the Right Honourable, CHARLES, Lord FITZWALTER.

My LORD,

THE sacred pages inform us of a son, that was *nourished up in the words of faith*, by his grandmother *Lois*, and his mother *Eunice*.

The like pious care has been taken for your Lordship's religious education, by one of the wisest of women, and the best of mothers that the age has afforded : and that your Lordship's improvement in knowledge and sincere piety, may answer the prayers, the tears, the endeavours, of such an endearing parent, who prefers your Lordship's temporal happiness abundantly before her own ; I take leave to put a part of the *inspired Writings* into your Lordship's hand, with an *endeavour of mine*, to render the reading of them both profitable and delightful to your Lordship.

Whilst *others* consume their precious hours in plays and romances, and such like corrupting and effeminating trash, which the *superfétation* of the *stage* furnishes the nation with, to the scandal of our holy religion, and the grief of all good men ; debasing the minds, and debauching the manners, of so many amongst us ; that your Lordship (and others of your *noble order* with you) may taste such incomparable delight and sweetness in, and experience such invaluable benefit and advantage by, reading the history of your blessed *Redeemer's* life and actions, and may thereby be transformed into his holy likeness here on earth, and spend an eternity in the rapturous contemplation and ravishing fruition of him in heaven, is the fervent prayer of,

My LORD,

Your Honour's faithfully devoted Servant and Chaplain,

W. BURKITT.

To FAMILY GOVERNORS, particularly those of my Charge.

AS religion did always consist in an imitation of *God*, and in resemblance of those excellences which shine forth in the *best* and most *perfect* Being, so we may imitate him now with much more ease and greater advantage, since his *Son was manifest in the flesh, and dwelt amongst us* : for he was pleased to become *man*, on purpose to show us how we might become like to *God*, by a daily imitation of his holiness. And it is most certain, that God our Father will never own any of us for his children, unless he sees upon us the air and features, the impresses and resemblance, of Christ our elder Brother.

This consideration has induced me to set the example of the holy Jesus before myself and you, in these *plain practical* Notes upon the *holy Evangelists*, which contain remarks upon the history of our Saviour's *life, doctrine, and miracles*, and of his *death, resurrection, and ascension* : to the intent that the temper of our minds, and the actions of our lives, may be a lively transcript of the mind and life of our blessed Redeemer : that we may admire and imitate his unspotted purity, his condescending humility, his fervent charity, his patience under sufferings and reproaches, his readiness to forgive injuries, and his entire resignation to the Divine will in all conditions of life whatsoever : that so following our *Lord and Master* in all the steps of an imitable virtue, and setting his example continually before us, we may be daily correcting and reforming our lives by that glorious pattern ; for without present likeness to him, we have no grounds to hope that we shall hereafter live with him.

A true compassion to your souls, and a fervent desire to further their salvation, from the *press* as well as from the *pulpit*, has put me upon redeeming time for this work.

I must acknowledge, my constant preaching thrice a week unto you, (besides occasionals,) and visiting as often a populous and scattered parish from house to house amongst you, (which I have always accounted a most important part of my duty,)

would allow me but little, too little, time for such a work as this, which I heartily wish had fallen upon the shoulders of some that had more leisure, and greater abilities, for writing on this noble and lofty subject, which even to eternity can never be exhausted. But thus much I can truly say, that earnestly imploring Divine assistance, I have done what I could; my work has been my recreation, and the Lord accept and succeed it.

And I have this observation to ground my hope of acceptance and success upon, that Almighty God has in all ages rendered those labours of his servants, (how mean soever in themselves,) most acceptable and useful, which have been employed in the profitable explication of any part of the holy Scriptures: as if *He*, who imprinted such a majesty upon the text, delighted also to reflect an honour upon the interpreters thereof.

My design in preparing and giving these *Notes* into your hands, is to oblige you to read a part of the Holy Scriptures in your families every day: and to invite you therunto, the sacred text is here at large recited, and controversies declined.

And I do most affectionately request you not to suffer the *holy Word of God*, which is in all your hands, to lie by you as a neglected book; but daily to read it in and to your families, with a simplicity of mind to be directed and instructed by it.

All the return I desire from you for this *my labour of love*, is, your living in a daily imitation of that grand pattern of holiness and obedience which is here set before you, and in every page recommended to you; and that we may continue to strive together in our prayers one with and one for another, for that grace which may enable us to the faithful discharge of our respective duties towards God, towards each other, and all mankind. And that the happy union and unanimity which hath hitherto been amongst us, may continue and increase still with us, to the glory of God, the honour of our holy religion, the present benefit and comfort, and the eternal joy and rejoicing, both of minister and people, in the day of the Lord Jesus: which, as it is the fervent prayer, so it shall be the constant endeavour, of your unworthy minister, whose highest ambition it is to serve you in faith and fellowship of the gospel, whilst I am

W. BURKITT.

### A PRAYER before the Reading of the Holy Scriptures.

**A**LMIGHTY God and merciful Father, who hast appointed thy Word to be a light to our feet, and a lamp unto our paths, and caused all holy scripture to be written for our learning: Grant us the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, that we may in such wise read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy Holy Word we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

And seeing of thy tender love to mankind thou hast given thy dear and only Son, to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life, give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive this his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.





# EXPOSITORY NOTES, &c.

ON THE

## HOLY GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

# SAINT MATTHEW.

THE HOLY BIBLE contains the whole Revelation of the will of GOD to the children of men. This sacred book is usually divided into the Old and New Testament. The Old Testament contains the law and the prophets; the writings of the New Testament are either histories or epistles: the histories are the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles; the four Gospels were written by the four Evangelists whose names they bear; of whom St. Matthew and St. John were eye-witnesses of what they wrote, but St. Mark and St. Luke had what they wrote from the relation of others.

This Gospel before us, of St. Matthew, contains an history of the birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection of the holy JESUS; all which are the most stupendous and amazing matters and mysteries, as well as the most necessary truths to be known and believed, in the world: and

This Chapter before us contains the genealogy or pedigree of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, as he was man, unto verse 17. and then relates the fact of his wonderful incarnation, to the end of the chapter.

### CHAP. I.

**T**HE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

That is, the descent of Jesus Christ, who was, according to the flesh, the son of David and the son of Abraham, is on this wise. And his genealogy from Abraham down to his reputed father was thus. Here note, That our Evangelist, designing to write a narrative of our Saviour's life, begins with his pedigree and genealogy, and shews whom he descended from, namely, from David and Abraham. Where observe, 1. That David is named before Abraham, because he being a king, and an illustrious type of the Messiah, the Jews expected, and do to this day expect, that the son of David should reign over them; and that they should enjoy a temporal kingdom by him. Observe, 2. The names given to our blessed Saviour, *Jesus* and *Christ*; *Jesus* is his Hebrew name, and signifies, A Saviour; *Christ* is his Greek name, and signifies, Anointed: from whence some do infer an intimation and encouragement, that both Hebrews and Greeks, both Jews and Gentiles, may alike come unto Christ for life and salvation, he being the common Saviour of both; according to that of St. John, *Epist.* 1. chap. ii. ver. 2. *He is the pro-*

*phitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; 3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; 4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

Both the Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke, make mention of our Saviour's pedigree; the former by his reputed father's side, the latter by his mother's side: the design of both was to present us with a general draught of our Lord's pedigree and descent, and not to be strict and accurate in enumerating every individual person. This should teach us, not to be over-curious in scanning the parts of this genealogy, much less captiously to object against it. For if the Evangelists were not critical and exact in composing this genealogy, why should we shew ourselves so in examining it? Rather let us attend to the design of the Holy Ghost in writing of it, which was two-fold: First, for the honour of our Saviour, as man, shewing who were his noble

and royal progenitors according to the flesh. Secondly, for the confirmation of our faith, touching the reality of our Redeemer's incarnation. The scripture making mention of all his progenitors, from the first man Adam to his reputed father Joseph, will not suffer us to doubt either of the truth of his human nature, or of the certainty of his being the promised Messiah. Learn hence, That the wisdom of God hath taken all necessary care, and used all needful means, for the satisfying the minds of all unprejudiced persons touching the reality of Christ's human nature, and the certainty of his being the promised Messiah: for both these ends is our Saviour's genealogy and descent recorded in the holy scriptures.

5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; 6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias; 7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; 8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; 9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; 10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; 11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon; 12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; 13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; 15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; 16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17 So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are*

fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

Observe, Here are several women mentioned in our Saviour's genealogy, and all, or most of them, have a brand of infamy upon them. Thamar was one, with whom her father-in-law Judah committed incest; Rachab is called an harlot; Ruth came of Moab, whom Lot begat of his own daughter; and Bathsheba the wife of Uriah was one with whom David had committed adultery. Now the wisdom of God has thought fit to leave all this upon record for several ends and purposes. 1. To denote the freeness of God's grace, which extends itself in the saving effects and benefits of it to them that are most unworthy and ill-deserving. 2. To encourage the greatest sinners to go unto Christ by faith, and seek to be ingrafted into him: for as Christ by the power of his Godhead did purify our nature from all the pollution of our ancestors, so he can, by the power of his grace and Spirit, sanctify our persons and natures, how foul and impure soever they either are or have been. 3. Hereby our Lord gives us to understand that he came to save the most notorious sinners, as well as those whose lives have been less scandalous. 4. This is recorded for the support of such as are illegitimate and base born; how vile soever their parents' sin has rendered them in the eyes of men, it is their own sin only which exposes them to contempt in the sight of God. It is not illegitimacy, but unregeneracy, that makes us objects of God's wrath.

18 Now the birth of Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

That is, the birth of Christ was not in the ordinary and natural way, but his mother Mary was found to be with child by the extraordinary and miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost. Here note, That the espousal of Mary to Joseph was for the safety of Christ, and for the credit and reputation of the Virgin. It was for our Saviour's safety, because being to fly into Egypt, he has Joseph his reputed father to take care of him; and it was for the Virgin's reputation, lest she should have been accounted unclean. Learn hence, What a special regard Almighty God has to the

fame and reputation of his children: he would have them free from the least suspicion of evil and dishonesty. Mary being espoused to an husband, frees herself from the suspicion of naughtiness, and her son from the imputation of an illegitimate birth. Observe farther, The miraculous conception of the holy Jesus; the Holy Ghost overshadowed the Virgin, and did miraculously cause her conception without the help of an human father. Thus Christ was the Son of God as well in his human as in his divine nature; he must needs be a perfect holy person, who was purely conceived by the Holy Spirit's operation.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

That is, being a holy person, and a strict observer of the rites of his nation, he was unwilling to company with a defiled woman, and therefore minded to put her away by giving a bill of divorce into her hand before two witnesses; but being kind and gentle, he intended to *put her away privily*, lest she should have been exposed, and stoned to death. Observe here, How early our dear Lord's sufferings began; he and his mother are designed to be put away, even when he was but an embryo in the womb. Observe farther, From the great clemency of Joseph toward the suspected Virgin, that kind and merciful men always presume the best, and prosecute with gentleness, especially where life is concerned. Meek Joseph doth resolve upon the milder course, and chooses rather to put her away privily, than publicly to expose her.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Two things are here observable; namely, the care that Almighty God takes, 1. For *Joseph's satisfaction*. 2. For vindicating the *Virgin's reputation*. For Joseph's satisfaction an angel is despatched, to give assurance that the Virgin was not defiled by man, but overshadowed by the Holy Ghost. Whence note, That Almighty God will certainly find out ways and means for the people's satisfaction, when they are wil-

ling, and desirous above all things, to come to the knowledge and right understanding of their duty. Observe, 2. How the angel clears the Virgin's innocence, as well as satisfies Joseph's doubtings, by assuring him, that what was conceived in her was by the Holy Ghost. Learn hence, That God will in his own time clear the innocency of such as suffer in their name and reputation for the sake of Christ, though for the present they may lie under the burden of disgrace and shame.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Observe here, 1. A prediction of our Saviour's birth; the Virgin *shall bring forth a son*. 2. A precept for the imposition of his name; *Thou shalt call his name Jesus*, that is, a Saviour. 3. The reason why that name was given him; because *he should save his people*, not temporally, as Joshua did the Israelites from their enemies, but spiritually and eternally, *from their sins*; not in their sins, but from them: that is, from the guilt and punishment, from the power and dominion, of them. Observe, 4. The peculiar subjects of this privilege; *his people*: *He shall save his people from their sins*. Learn, 1. That sin is the evil of evils; or that sin, considered in itself, is comparatively the greatest and worst of evils. 2. That the great end of Christ's coming into the world, was to be a Saviour from this evil. 3. That Christ's own people do want, and stand in need of, a Saviour, as well as others: if he does not save them from their sins, they must die in and for their sins, as well as others. Therefore he saves them from sin three ways; 1. By obtaining pardon for sin, and in reconciling us to God. 2. By weakening the reigning power of sin, and implanting a new principle of holiness in the heart. 3. By perfecting and accomplishing all these happy beginnings at the end of this life, in heaven. Dr. Hammond's Pract. Catech.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; which being interpreted, is, God with us.



Of all the prophets of the Old Testament, the prophet *Isay* has the honour to be first recited in the New. Here the Evangelist quotes his prophecy of Christ's incarnation, *Behold, a virgin shall be with child*. Learn thence, That the great mystery of our Saviour's wonderful incarnation was (though darkly) revealed to the church of God under the Old Testament. Observe farther, The name given to our Saviour under the Old Testament, *Emmanuel*, that is, *God with us*: God manifest in our flesh; God appearing in our nature; God reconciling man to himself. O happy and blessed union of two natures in one person: Christ is God and man united, that God and man may be reconciled.

24 Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

Joseph is no sooner assured that Mary is with child by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost, but he instantly obeys the Lord's command, and takes Mary to him, without farther disputing or delaying. Learn thence, That a gracious person, when once satisfied in God's word of command, disputes no farther, but instantly complies with the will of God, even in the most hazardous and difficult duties.

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.

It is piously believed, though not positively in scripture asserted, that the Virgin had no other child but our Saviour; it is a very probable opinion, though not an infallible article of faith, as the church of Rome would make it: for the word *until* signifies in scripture, as much as *never*. So *Gen. xxviii. 15. I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have promised!* that is, *I will never leave thee*. So the words following, *her first-born son*, do not imply that she had any child after, but that she had none before. That child which first openeth the womb, is usually in scripture called the first-born, though there was no other born after. Thus, *Josh. xvii. 1. Machir* is called the first-born of Manasseh, though he had no more children. So that Christ not only as God, but also as he was man, was the first-born and only son. St. Austin expounds and applies *Ezek. xlv. 2.* to the Virgin Mary; *This gate shall be shut, and it shall not*

*be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord God of Israel hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut*. And others of the ancients say, That as Christ lay in a tomb, in which none lay before himself, so he lodged in a womb, in which none ever lay, either before or after himself. But he said, *Quid post partum secutum erat curiosè non est quærendum*: What the Virgin was afterwards, is of small concern to the mystery; therefore not to be enquired after. And yet it is now passed by some into a matter of faith, that the Virgin Mary was ever a virgin, and it hath been styled an heresy to hold the contrary; but how it is consistent with good divinity to make that an article of divine faith, which is founded on no divine revelation, or to make that necessary to be believed, which confessedly is not contained in the holy scripture, let the church of Rome answer.

#### CHAP. II.

Our Saviour's miraculous conception, by the power of the Holy Ghost, being recorded in the first chapter, several remarkable circumstances relating to his birth are set down in this: as, namely, The place of his birth, *Beth-lehem*; and the time, *In the days of Herod the king*.

NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Observe here, 1. The place of our Lord's birth, *Bethlehem*: he was born, not at Athens, not at Rome, not at Jerusalem, not in any opulent or magnificent city, but in the meanest of the cities of Judah; thereby shewing us, that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he little regarded pomp and outward greatness. O how can we be abased enough for Christ, that thus neglected himself for us! Observe, 2. The time of our Lord's birth, *In the days of Herod the king*. This Herod being a foreigner, and made king by the Romans which now reigned over the Jews; in him was fulfilled Jacob's prophecy, *Gen. xlix. 10. That the sceptre should not depart from Judah*, that is, the Jews should have governors of their own nation, *until Shiloh come*; that is, until Christ, the promised Messiah, come in the flesh. So that, considering the circumstances of time and place, where and when Christ was born, it was and is wilful obstinacy, in the Jews, to deny that the Messiah is come in the flesh. Observe, 3. That tribute of honour which

was paid unto our Saviour at his birth : the wise men of the east came and worshipped him ; that is, the Chaldean, Arabian, or Persian astronomers, who, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles, seek after Christ ; whilst the Jews, his own people, rejected him. Oh, how will their coming so far as the east to seek Christ, rise up another day in judgment against us, if we refuse to be found by Christ, who came from heaven to seek us !

2 Saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews ? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Observe here, 1. The inquiry that they make after Christ : they do not ask *whether* he was born, but *where* he was born ; not doubting of the fact, but ignorant of the place. Observe, 2. The ground of their inquiry, *For we have seen his star* : they had seen a star, but how did they know it was his star ? Probably by divine revelation ; they had a light within, as well as a star without, or they had never found Christ. It is likely the Holy Spirit's illumination accompanied the star's apparition. As God made known the birth of Christ to the Jews by an angel, so he manifested the same to the Gentiles by a new-created star. Observe, 3. The end of their journey : *We are come to worship him* ; that is, to pay all that honour and homage which is due to a great and mighty prince ; all that adoration and worship which belongs to the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of the world. All honour and homage, all glory and worship, is due to Christ from the sons of men, and will be given him by those that know him.

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Observe here, That when Christ came into the world to save men, it cast the world into a consternation, and caused wonderful disturbance. Herod is first concerned, and next *all Jerusalem with him* : Herod, for fear of losing his kingdom ; Jerusalem, for fear of new commotions. Thus Christ, who was the angel's song, the wise men's joy, Israel's consolation, becomes Herod's fear, and Jerusalem's terror. But why was Herod thus disturbed ? 'Tis true, a king is born, but one whose kingdom is not of this world ; 'twas Herod's false apprehension

that was the cause of this perturbation. Hence we see that the greatest enmities, and the bitterest animosities, have arisen from causeless fears, and groundless jealousies.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea : for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda : for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Herod, being in great perplexity, convened a council of the chief priests and scribes, and demands of them the place where Christ the promised Messiah was to be born : they readily reply, out of the prophet Micah, chap. v. 2. that Bethlehem was the place ; this was the city of David's birth, and of Christ's the son of David. *Bethlehem* signifies *the house of bread*, and was so called from its fertility and fruitfulness, and, as some think, with reference to Christ, the true bread of life, born there. Bethlehem was a mean and contemptible place in itself ; but being honoured with Christ's presence, how great is it ! Learn thence, That the presence of Christ dignifies and exalts a place, how mean soever in itself. Bethlehem, though a little city in itself, yet is not the least among the cities of Judah, because Christ is born there.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem ; and said, Go and search diligently for the young child ; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Observe here, 1. How Herod cloaks his intended cruelty with disguised hypocrisy ; he had a murder in his heart, when he pretended to worship Christ with his mouth. There is no villany so great, but will mask itself under a pretence and show of piety. Herod veils his intent to kill Christ with a pretence to worship him.

Observe, 2. Herod calls him the *young child*, not the *young king*; that word was too big to come out of Herod's proud mouth; he could neither bear the thing, nor brook the title. A king 'tis true he is, but one that will never be thy rival; he has a kingdom, but it is not of this world. Observe, 3. How craftily Herod lays his plot: he desires the wise men to enquire thoroughly, and to inform him privately. To be wise in doing mischief, is the worst wisdom in the world: 'tis not the wisdom from above, but from hell beneath.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed: and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Observe here, 1. How the star, which for some time disappeared, now appears again, to their farther direction in finding Christ: teaching us, that God will not be wanting to such as are on the way to seek Christ, but will renew directions and encouragements to them, according as they stand in need; none ever sincerely sought Christ, but they certainly found him at the last. Obs. 2. That the joy which ariseth in such a soul as has found Christ, is unutterable and unspeakable: the wise men here rejoiced with joy, with great joy, with exceeding great joy. Obs. 3. The wise men have found this young king, they bring presents to him, according to the manner of the eastern countries; namely, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which were the principal commodities of the east. But the best present we can make to Christ, is ourselves: he seeks not ours, but us; and rather desires what we are than what we have. Yet the providence of God was wonderfully seen in these presents, for hereby provision was made for the sustenance of Joseph and Mary, and the child Jesus, in their exile, or flight into Egypt, which they were shortly to undergo.

12 And being warned of God in a

dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

God having warned these wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod, they return home another way. But did these wise men play the parts of honest men, in that they returned not again to Herod? *Ans.* It appears not that they promised Herod to return, though he expected it; or if they did, it was in consideration that Herod should come and worship Christ, not murder and destroy him. But if they promised him never so positively, God Almighty gave them a dispensation from that promise, by commanding them to return home another way. Herod kept his design against Christ close from the wise men, but he could not conceal his intentions from the infinitely wise God; he knew the purposes of his heart, and, by his providence, kept Christ out of his hand. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child, to destroy him. 14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 15 And was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Observe here, 1. Our Lord's humiliation, by persecution in the very morning of his life; he was banished almost as soon as born. *Flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.* Ungrateful Herod! Was this entertainment for a Saviour? What! raise the country upon Christ, as if a destroyer, rather than a Saviour, had landed upon thy coasts! Oh! barbarous injustice! to deny a subject the protection of those laws under which he was born: the child of a beggar might claim that as his birthright, which was here denied to the Son of God. Lord! how great an humiliation was this, not only to become an infant, but in thine infancy to be hurried up and down, and driven out of

thine own land as a vagabond ! Oba. 2. How our Lord himself in a time of persecution flies for safety, who was able a thousand ways to have preserved himself from danger : teaching us that in times of difficulty and danger, 'tis neither unwarrantable nor unbecoming to preserve our lives by flight ; surely 'tis no shame for us to fly, when our Captain doth both practise it, and command it also. Christ by his own example hath sanctified that state of life unto us, and by his command has made it lawful for us. Oba. 3. The place which Christ flies unto for safety, and that is Egypt : an unlikely place, considered in itself ; who could expect liberty in that house of bondage ? But any place is good, if God sends us thither, and Christ be in our company. His presence can make Egypt itself not only safe, but delightful also. Oba. 4. How readily Joseph complies with the divine command : instantly *he arose, and took the young child, and fled.* Faith gave wings to his obedience, and instantly vanquished all his fears, and afforded a fuller supply than all the treasures of the Arabian princes. Teaching us, That when our direction is clear, our compliance is speedy. We cannot be too forward and expeditious in the execution of divine commands. Oba. 5. Though Joseph at the divine command of God flies presently from Herod's rage, yet he flies privately, by night, and prudently begins his journey when least notice should be taken of his motion : teaching us, That although we have never so many promises of safety and deliverance, yet we must not put God upon working miracles for our preservation, when it may be obtained in the use of means.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Observe here, How Herod, having played the fox before, acts the lion now ; his secret policy not succeeding, he breaks out into open and inhuman cruelty. Learn, That when fraud and subtily fail the enemies of the church, then they fall to open rage, and barbarous inhumanity. Thus here these holy innocents fall as a sacrifice to Herod's

rage, and die for Christ, who came to die for them ; and so were martyrs in deed, though not in will. Some affirm that Herod did not spare his own child, then at nurse in the coasts of Bethlehem ; which made Augustus say, He had rather be Herod's hog, than Herod's child ; because the Jews did never eat swine's flesh. And Herod, in compliance with the Jews, abstained from it also.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Observe here, The loud and bitter cry which the mothers of Bethlehem make for the death of their innocent children which were barbarously slain by the sword of Herod ; here was lamentation, weeping, and great mourning made by Rachel, that is, by the women inhabiting in and about Bethlehem, where Rachel's sepulchre was : for the land about Bethlehem was called Rachel, from her sepulchre, so famous in those parts. Rachel here is not the name of a person, but of a place. Observe, 2. The cause and reason of this cry and bitter lamentation : the mothers weep, not because the children are, but because they are not ; they did not, with some wicked parents, repine because they had children, but because they had lost them : mothers have the sharpest throes both in their children's births and burials. As children in their births are their mothers' Benjamins ; so in their burial they are their mothers' Benonis, sons of sorrow.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel : for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

Observe, 1. Herod's death : like a bloody persecutor, he is sent unlamented to his grave. Historians say, that out of his body issued forth such impure streams of blood, that the loathsomeness and pain made him attempt the killing of himself. God seldom suffers persecutors to pass in quiet to their

graves; they rarely die the common death of all men, having no other balm at their funeral than their own blood. Observe, 2. The happy consequence of Herod's death. Christ is now called home without danger: Herod being sent to his grave, the coast is clear for the return of the holy family. The death of persecutors is the delivery of the persecuted. Observe, 3. An angel is despatched to acquaint Joseph with Herod's death. O how cheerfully do those glorious spirits execute the commands of their sovereign Master! With what delight do they carry the message of God's kindness to their fellow-creatures! Lord, what an argument is this of thy love unto us, that in this our pilgrimage state thou allowest us thine own royal guard to attend and preserve us!

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

Observe here, 1. The just fear that Joseph has upon his mind, that Herod's son would be as bloody a tyrant as his flagitious father. No wonder that the children of cruel persecutors are suspected to tread in their bloody parents' steps. Observe, 2. How God's warrant and direction doth quiet Joseph's mind, resolve his doubts, and remove his fears, and make him readily comply with the command of God: *Being warned of God, he removes out of Egypt into Galilee.* O how safe and satisfactory is it in all our ways to follow the call and command of God! Joseph and Mary durst not move their feet, no not out of Egypt itself, till God gives them a warrant for their departure, and bids them go.

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, *He shall be called a Nazarene.*

A threefold interpretation is given of these words, *He shall be called a Nazarene.* Some read the words, 1. *He shall be called a Nazarite.* The Nazarites were a religious and separate rank of persons among the Jews, who abstained from wine, and came not near the dead for fear of pol-

lution. Christ was a holy person, but no Nazarite, in a strict sense; for he drank wine, and touched the dead. 2. Others read the words, *He shall be called a Netzer*, a branch, in allusion to *Isa. xi. 1.* where he is called a *Branch of the root of Jesse.* Christ was the true branch of which the prophets had so often spoken. 3. Others will have the word Nazarene refer to the city of Nazareth, where Christ was conceived, and lived most of his time: *He shall be called a Nazarene*, because he dwelt at Nazareth. Hence his disciples were called the sect of the Nazarenes; that is, the followers of him that dwelt at Nazareth: and Christ himself is pleased to own the title, *Acts xxii. 8. I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.* Learn from hence, the great humility of mind that was found in our Saviour. He was born at Bethlehem, a little city; he lives at Nazareth, a poor, contemptible place: he aspires not after the grandeur of the world, but is meek and lowly in spirit. May the same humble mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus!

### CHAP. III.

This Evangelist having declared our Saviour's miraculous conception in the first chapter, and recorded several remarkable circumstances relating to his birth in the second chapter, in this chapter before us he passes over in silence the whole course of our Saviour's life in private; taking no notice how he spent his minority whilst he dwelt at Nazareth, which was till he was thirty years old; at which time he entered upon his public ministry, having John the Baptist for his harbinger and forerunner, as this chapter fully informs us.

**I**N those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Observe here, 1. The preacher sent by God, *John the Baptist*; a pattern of mortification, and a preacher of repentance. Observe, 2. The place he was sent to preach in, *The wilderness of Judea*; not in populous Jerusalem, but in a barren wilderness, where inhabitants are few, and probably very ignorant and rude. Learn hence, That it is God's prerogative to send forth the preachers of the gospel when, and whither, and to what people, he pleases; and none must assume the office before he be sent. Observe, 3. The doctrine that he preaches; namely, the doctrine of repentance, *Repent ye.* This was to prepare the people for the Messiah, and the grace of the gospel. Learn thence, That the preach-

ing of the doctrine of repentance is absolutely necessary, in order to the preparing of the hearts of sinners for the receiving Christ Jesus and his holy doctrine. Observe, 4. The motives which St. John uses to enforce the exhortation to repentance: *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*: that is, Now is the so much expected time of the appearing of the Messiah come; the Old-Testament dispensation is now to be abolished, and the mercy and grace of the gospel is now to be revealed: therefore repent, and amend your lives. Note thence, That the free and full tenders of grace and mercy in the gospel, are the most alluring arguments to move a sinner to repent, and to convert to God.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

The papists, from John Baptist's living in the wilderness, would make him the first founder of the order of the hermits, but very groundlessly. For, 1. What he did was by God's command; what they do, is by the dictates of their own fancy. He busied himself in preaching in the wilderness; they bury themselves alive, and do nothing. 2. He lived in the wilderness but for a time, afterwards we find him at court, preaching a sermon to Herod, but they bind themselves by a vow to live and die hermits.

4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

The plainness of John's habit and diet is here declared: He was habited in a plain suit of camel's hair, much as Elijah was before him: and as his habit was plain, so his diet was ordinary; feeding upon herbs, and such things as the wilderness affords. Hence it was that Nazianzen said, He was all voice; a voice in his habit, a voice in his diet, and a voice in his whole conversation. His example teaches us, that the ministers of the gospel are not to affect bravery in apparel, or delicacy in diet; but having the necessary comforts and needful conveniences of life, to be therewith content.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,

Observe here, The great encouragement which John had in his ministry, from the people's attendance upon it: he was now fishing for souls, and God brought the people very thick about the net of the gospel, and multitudes were enclosed, no doubt, to his joy and great satisfaction. For it is matter of great rejoicing to the ministers of Christ, when they find their people forward to encourage their ministry by a diligent attendance.

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

This place the papists bring to support their doctrine of auricular confession; but very groundlessly. For, 1. The confession of those converts was voluntary, and not constrained. 2. It was general, and not of every particular sin. 3. It was public and open, not in the ear of a priest. 4. It was a confession of sin committed before baptism, not after they were baptized: in all which circumstances it differs from the auricular confession of the church of Rome very greatly. Note, The confession of sin past, together with a profession of faith in, and obedience to, Christ for the time to come, are necessary requisites and qualifications in all persons of riper years that are admitted to baptism. John admitted these persons to baptism, upon their confession of sin and promises of amendment. From whence we may learn, that such persons as have been very bad, upon a profession of their repentance, and promising to become better, may be admitted to the holy sacrament, provided that we warn them, as the Baptist did these, not only to make profession of repentance, but to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: 9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Here we have the entertainment which John gave to his unexpected auditors, the Pharisees and Sadducees, which came to hear him, and to be baptized by him. He gives them first a quick and cutting com-

pellation, *O generation of vipers! next a sharp and severe reprobation, Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* It was matter of wonder and admiration to see such men turn proselytes. Note thence, That the condition of proud Pharisees, pretending and false-hearted hypocrites, though it be very dangerous, yet is not hopeless and desperate; and their salvation, though very improbable, yet must not be despaired of as impossible: and accordingly the Baptist, having given them a smart reproof, subjoins a seasonable exhortation, *Bring forth fruits meet for repentance*; as if he had said, Do not satisfy yourselves with a bare profession of repentance, but let us see the fruits of repentance in your daily conversation. Learn thence, That sincere repentance is not a barren thing, but constantly brings forth the fruits of holiness answerable to its nature. As the body without the spirit, and as faith without works, is dead; so repentance without fruits is dead also. Observe farther, How he enforces his exhortation with a necessary caution: *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father, &c.* As if he had said, Trust not to your outward privileges, and glory not in them; flatter not yourselves, that because you are Abraham's seed, and the only visible church, that therefore the judgments of God will not reach you; for God can, out of the obdurate Gentile world, who now worship stones, raise up a people to himself and take them into covenant with himself, and cast you all out, who have Abraham's blood running in your veins, but nothing of Abraham's faith in your hearts, nor of his obedience in your lives. Now from St. John's plain dealing with these hypocritical Pharisees, we learn, That it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of the ministers of Christ, to drive hypocrites from their vain confidence, who do constantly bear up themselves upon their external privileges, in the enjoyment of which they promise themselves a freedom from the judgments of God. *Think not to say within yourselves, We have, &c.*

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

The Baptist having preached the doctrine of repentance in the former verses, he backs it with a powerful motive in this verse, drawn from the certainty, the severity, and

suddenness of that vengeance which would come upon them if they continued impenitent; *Now is the axe laid to the root of the trees.* Learn, 1. That those whose hearts are not pierced with the sword of God's word, shall certainly be cut down and destroyed by the axe of his judgments. Learn, 2. That it is not unsuitable for gospel-preachers to press repentance and holiness of life upon their hearers from arguments of terror; John does it here, and Christ elsewhere. Observe farther, That forasmuch as the sin here specified is a sin of omission, which brings this sore and severe judgment, *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, as well as that which bringeth forth evil fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire*; we may gather, that sins of omission are certainly damning as well as sins of commission; the neglects of duty are as dangerous and damnable as the acts of sin. Such trees as stand in God's orchard, and bring forth no good fruit, are marked out as fuel for the devil's fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

In these words John declares the excellency of Christ's person and ministry above his own. As to his person, he owns that he was not worthy to carry his shoes after him, or to perform the lowest offices of service for him. And as to his office, he declares that Christ should not baptize as he did, with water, but with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; that is, should plentifully pour down of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit upon his proselytes, which, like fire, in their operation should purify their hearts from sin, consuming their lusts and corruptions; but at the same time he has a fiery indignation, and flaming judgments, to destroy and burn up impenitent sinners like combustible stubble. Where observe, How Christ is represented by one and the same metaphor of fire, in a way of comfort to his children, and in a way of terror unto his enemies; he is a fire unto both: he sits in his church as a refiner's fire; he is amongst his enemies as a consuming fire; a fire for his church to take comfort in, a fire for his enemies to perish by.

12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor,

and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

In these words the Baptist compares Christ, the promised Messiah, to an husbandman, the Jewish church to a barn-floor. The office of the husbandman is to thrash, fan, and winnow his corn, separating it from the chaff; preserving the one, and consuming the other. Learn hence, 1. That the church is Christ's floor. 2. That this floor Christ will purge, and that thoroughly. 3. That the word of Christ is the fan in his hand, by and with which he will thoroughly purge his floor. The church is compared to a floor, upon account of that mixture which is in the church; in a floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed. Thus in the church there is and will be a mixture of good and bad, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere christians. But this floor Christ will *purge*; purge it but not break it up; purge out its corruptions, but destroy not its essence and existence: and the fan with which he will purge his floor is his word, accompanied with the wind of discipline. The fan detects and discovers the chaff, and the wind dissipates and scatters it; and by the help of both, the floor is purged. *His fan is in his hand, &c.*

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Here we have our Saviour's solemn inauguration and public entrance upon his prophetic office, by baptism, or washing with water, according to the manner of the priests under the ceremonial law, *Exod. xxix. 4.* Where we have observable, 1. The circumstance of time; *Then cometh Jesus*; that is, after he had lain hid in Nazareth thirty years, he comes abroad, and enters upon his public ministry. Teaching us by his example, that when we are ripe and fit for public service, we should no less willingly leave our obscurity, than we took the benefit of it for our preparation. Observe, 2. The action itself; Christ is baptized now, as he was circumcised before; not because there was any impurity in him, either filth or foreskin, which wanted either the circumcising knife, or the baptismal water; yet purity itself condescends to be washed, Christ to be baptized; for these reasons: 1. That by this symbol he might enter himself into

the society of christians, as by circumcision he had done into the society of Jews; as a king condescends sometimes to be made a freeman of a city or corporation. 2. That he might by his own baptism sanctify the ordinance of baptism unto his church. 3. That thereby he might fulfil the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water, when they entered upon their office, as appears from *Exod. xxix. 4.* Observe, 4. The great condescension of Christ, in seeking and submitting to the baptism of *John*: Christ cometh to John, not John to Christ. Behold! the Lord seeking to his servant; Christ will be baptized of his messenger! our Saviour's design hereby no doubt was, to put honour upon the ministry of John. O how dare the greatest upon earth despise the ministry of man, being appointed by God, which Christ honoured in his own person, and graced with his own presence?

14 But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

Note here, 1. The modesty of John's refusal: *John forbade him*, and refused to admit him: but why? 1. In regard of Christ, because he knew he needed it not: such was his majesty and greatness, that he was above it; and such was his purity and holiness, that he could not want it; 2. In respect of himself, he knew his own uncleanness: *I have need to be baptized of thee, &c.* He thought it unsuitable that a sinner should baptize and wash him that was no sinner. 3. With respect to the people; lest they seeing Christ baptized, should apprehend him to be a sinner, and one that wanted the baptism of repentance as well as themselves. Observe, 2. As the modesty of John's refusal, so the reason he assigns for it; *I have need to be baptized of thee*: As if he had said, "Thou art purity, I am pollution; thou art spirit, I am flesh; thou art the Son of God, I am the son of Adam:" such an humble apprehension has this holy man of himself. Learn, That the more holy a person is, the more sensible he is of his unholiness; where there is most grace, there is the greatest sense of the want of grace.

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

These words contain our Saviour's reason,



why he submitted to John's baptism, because it became him to fulfil all righteousness; that is, to own every divine institution, particularly the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water, when they entered upon their office, *Erod. xxix. 4.* Learn hence, 1. That whatever the law required in order to perfect righteousness, that Christ fulfilled in most absolute perfection. 2. That as it became Christ to fulfil the righteousness of the ceremonial law for himself, so it is our duty and interest to fulfil the righteousness of the moral law for ourselves, as an evidence of our being righteous in God's sight, 1 John iii. 7. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17 And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Here we have the solemn inauguration of Christ into his prophetic office, accompanied with a threefold miracle. 1. The opening of the heavens. 2. The descent of the Holy Ghost upon him like as a dove descends. 3. God the Father's voice concerning the Son. The heavens were opened, to show that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us, by Christ's undertaking for us. As the first Adam shuts us out of heaven, the second Adam lets us into it; he opened heaven to us by his meritorious passion, and he keeps it open by his prevailing intercession. Next, the Holy Ghost descends like a dove upon our Saviour: here we have an evidence of the blessed Trinity; the Father speaks from heaven, the Son comes out of the water, and the Holy Ghost appears upon him. Hence we gather, That the Holy Ghost is not a quality or an operation, but a person, and a person really distinct from the Father and the Son. But why did the Holy Spirit now descend upon Christ, seeing he was now truly and really God? *Ans.* The divinity of Christ was quiescent in him, till he entered upon his prophetic office at thirty years old, and after. And the Holy Ghost now descends, first, For

the designation of his person; to show that Christ was the person set apart for the work and office of a mediator. Secondly, For the qualification of his person for the performance of his office. This was Christ's unction, *Isa. lxi. 1.* when he was anointed above his fellows, to be the king, priest, and prophet of his church. Last of all, We have the audible voice of God the Father pronouncing, 1. The nearness of Christ's relation to himself, *This is my Son*, not by adoption, but by eternal generation. 2. The endearment of his person, *This is my beloved Son*. 3. The fruit and benefit of this near and dear relation unto us, *In him I am well pleased*. Note, 1. That there is no possibility for any person to please God out of Christ; both our persons and our performances find acceptance only for his sake. 2. That in and through Christ, God is well pleased with all believers: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, &c.* Lord! what reviving news is this to thy church, to hear that her head and husband, her surety, mediator, and intercessor, is that only Son of God in whom his soul is delighted and ever well pleased! that Son who always pleased thee, and by and through whom thou art well pleased with, and reconciled to, thy offending creatures!

#### CHAP. IV.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with our blessed Saviour's combat with, and conquest over, Satan; and the first verse informs us of the time when and place where the combat was fought.

**T**HEN was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.

Observe, 1. The great humiliation of the Son of God, how exceedingly was he humbled by the horrid temptations wherewith he was assaulted, than which nothing could be more grievous to his holy heart. What could be more burdensome to him that was brought up from eternity with God the Father, than to be shut up in a wilderness with the devil, there to be baited by him so many days, having his ears filled, though not defiled, with horrid blasphemies spit upon the holy and reverend name of God! O deep abasement and wonderful humiliation of the Son of God! Observe, 2. The time when Christ entered the lists with Satan, implied in the word *then*; that is, first, immediately after his baptism; he is no sooner out of the water of baptism, but he is in the fire of temptation: secondly, im-

mediately after the Spirit descended upon, and the Father had by a voice from heaven manifested his complacency and satisfaction in him: *This is my beloved Son, &c.* Note thence, That great manifestations of love from God are usually followed with great temptations from Satan. Observe, 3. The place where this combat was fought, and that is, *in the wilderness*. Learn thence, That no place can privilege us from temptation, or be a sanctuary from Satan's assaults: the solitary wilderness has a tempter in it, yea, Satan sometimes makes use of men's solitariness to farther his temptations: a cell, a nunnery, or a cloister, are as open to Satan as the open fields; and the persons that live in them have a tempter without, and an enticer within, as well as other men. Observe, 4. The efficient cause of Christ's going into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan: *He was led up of the Spirit*, says St Matthew: *The Spirit drove him*, says St. Mark: that is, the Holy Spirit of God, not Satan the unclean spirit, for the devil is seldom if ever called *the spirit*, but usually some brand of reproach is annexed, as the evil spirit, or the unclean spirit. Christ was *led by* the Spirit; that is, he was carried by a strong impulse of the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Learn hence, 1. That none of the children of God ought to expect a freedom from temptation; seeing Christ himself, in the days of his flesh, was strongly solicited by Satan unto sin. 2. That all the temptations wherewith the children of God are assaulted, are ordered by a divine and special dispensation. Satan could not assault our Saviour till he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for that end; and he shall not assault any of his members, but by divine permission.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred.

Observe here, How the divine power upheld the human nature of Christ without food. What Moses did at the giving of the law, Christ doth at the beginning of the gospel, namely, fast forty days and forty nights. Christ hereby intended our admiration, not our imitation; or, if our imitation, of the action only, not of the time. Christ teaches us by fasting and prayer to prepare ourselves for a conflict with our spiritual enemies; as he prepared himself by fasting to grapple with the tempter, so should we.

3 And when the tempter came to

him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Observe here, 1. The occasion of the temptation. 2. The temptation itself. The occasion was our Saviour's hunger and want of bread. Learn thence, That when God suffers any of his dear children to fall into want, and to be straitened for outward things, Satan takes a mighty advantage thereupon to tempt and assault them. But what doth he tempt our Saviour to? to the sin of distrust, to question his Sonship, *If thou be the Son of God*; and next to distrust his Father's providence and care, *Command that these stones be made bread*. As if Satan had said, "How unlikely is it that thou shouldst be highly favoured, and yet deserted. What! the Son of God, and yet ready to starve! Certainly if thou canst not supply thy necessities, thou art nothing akin to God." Learn hence, 1. That Satan's grand design is, first to tempt the children of God to doubt of their adoption; and next, to distrust God's fatherly care over them, and provision for them; and last of all, to use unwarrantable means to help themselves. Thus Satan dealt with Christ, and thus he deals with christians: for to work a miracle at Satan's direction was not a lawful mean of providing food for himself.

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Observe here, The weapons which our Saviour made use of to repel the temptation, and to vanquish the tempter; and that is, the word of God: *It is written*. Learn, That the scripture, or the written word of God, is the only sure weapon wherewith to vanquish Satan, and to beat back all his fiery temptations. Satan himself has not the impudence to oppose scripture. What monsters of impiety then are they, who ridicule and deride it? They not only run counter to the practice of Christ, but outdo the devil himself in impudence.

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.

That is, Satan, by God's permission, took up his body and carried it in the air, and set it upon one of the battlements of the temple. Learn hence, 1. What a mighty power evil spirits have over our bodies, if God permits them to execute and exercise

their power upon them. 2. That it is owing to the gracious care and watchful providence of God over us, that we are not hurried away bodily by Satan. Thanks be to God, though the devil's malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; and as he cannot do all the mischief he would to the bodies and souls of men, so he shall not do all he can. *Quest.* But why is the holy city, and holy temple, chosen by Satan to be the scene of this temptation? *Ans.* I cannot tell, unless he apprehended (as he might) that the holiness of the place would aggravate the sin. No place so sacred, no duty so holy, as to protect us from Satan's assaults. This enemy pursues us even to the horns of the altar. Lord! how ought we at all times and in all place to be upon our watch and guard, especially in thy presence, because then and there Satan is most active and busy, and most desirous to draw us into sin.

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Here we have observable, first, The sin which Satan tempts Christ unto: and next, The argument which he tempts him from: the sin tempted to, is the sin of self-murder: *Cast thyself down.* Whence we learn, That self-murder is a sin which Christ himself was, and the best of saints may, by Satan, be tempted to the commission of. But forasmuch as Satan tempted Christ to murder himself, but had not power to do it himself, (do thou *cast thyself down,*) we learn, That though Satan may tempt, yet he cannot compel; he may entice, but cannot enforce any to sin, without their own consent. Observe, 2. The argument which Satan uses, it is a scripture argument; he quotes the promise of God, *He shall give his angels charge over thee.* What a marvel is here, to find Satan with a Bible under his arm, and a text of scripture in his mouth! Christ had alleged scripture before to Satan; here Satan retorts scripture back again to Christ: *It is written,* says Christ; *It is written,* says Satan. Learn thence, That it is no wonder to hear heretics and hypocrites quote scripture, when Satan himself durst recite it: he that had profanely touched the sacred body of Christ with his hand,

sticks not presumptuously to handle the holy scriptures of God with his tongue. Yet observe, How wretchedly the devil wrests, perverts, and misapplies, the scripture. When God promises his angels shall keep us, it is *in viis, non in precipitiis*; 'tis in all God's ways, not in any of our own crooked paths. Note here, That although the children of God have the promise of the guardianship of holy angels, yet then only may they expect their protection, when they are walking in the way of their duty, and using the means for their own preservation.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Observe here, Though the devil had wrested and abused scripture, yet still Christ alleges scripture. The abuse of the holy scriptures by heretics and seducers is no argument against the use of them. We must not throw away our Bibles because the devil quotes scripture: but as Christ here compares scripture with scripture, so should we, in order to find out the true sense and meaning of it; for scripture is the best interpreter of itself; scripture is most clearly expounded by scripture. This Satan knew full well, and therefore dares not make any further reply.

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

The next sin, which Satan tempts our Saviour to, is the sin of idolatry, even to worship the devil himself. O thou impudent and foul spirit! To desire thy Creator to adore thee, an apostate creature; Surely there can be no sin so black and foul, so gross and monstrous, but that the christian may be tempted to it, when Christ himself was tempted to worship the tempter. St. Matthew reads the words, *If thou wilt fall down and worship me*: St. Luke, *If thou wilt worship before me.* Whence we may gather, says Dr. Lightfoot, That if to worship before the devil be to worship the devil, then to worship before an image is to worship the image. Obs. 2. The bait which Satan makes use of to allure our Saviour to the sin of idolatry; and that was, in representing to his eye and view all the glories of the world in the most inviting

snanner, and that in a moment of time; to the instant it might affect him the more, and prevail the sooner. Learn thence, That the pomp and greatness, the glory and grandeur, of this world, is made use of by Satan, as a dangerous snare to draw men to a compliance with him, in his temptations unto sin. When Satan sets thee upon a pinnacle, look to thyself.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Observe here, 1. With what zeal and indignation of spirit our blessed Saviour repels and beats back this temptation of Satan: *Get thee hence.* Note thence, That the greater the sins are which the devil tempts us to, the greater our zeal and indignation ought to be in opposing and resisting the temptation to them. A great temptation must be withstood with great resolution. Obs. 2. The weapon with which he repels and beats back the fiery dart of Satan's temptation, and that is, with the shield of scripture: *It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.* Learn thence, That God is the sole object of religious worship: it is so peculiarly the Creator's due, that to give it to any creature is gross idolatry, and repugnant to the scriptures. No creature is to pay divine adoration to any but his Creator; hence it appears that Christ is not a creature, divine worship being given to him.

11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Observe here, 1. The issue of this combat; Satan is conquered, and quits the field! *Then the devil leaveth him.* teaching us, That nothing like a vigorous resistance of temptation causes the tempter to flee from us; *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* Obs. 2. Our Lord's triumph over his enemy: *Behold, angels came and ministered unto him;* food to his hungry body, and comfort to his tempted soul. They came no sooner, lest it should be thought he needed their assistance; they came now, because he was now pleased to make use of their assistance. Learn hence, That those who in the hour of temptation do hold out in resisting Satan, shall find the power and faithfulness of God will not be wanting to them, to send in succour and relief in the end.

12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee: 13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: 14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; 16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour, hearing of John's imprisonment, provides for his own safety, by departing into Galilee. As our holy Lord avoided persecution, so may we. Observe, 2. The place in Galilee he comes to, Capernaum. Christ had three cities which he called his own; Nazareth, where he was bred; Bethlehem, where he was born; and Capernaum, where he dwelt: this was a sea-coast town in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthali. Observe, 3. The special providence of God in this change of our Saviour's habitation; for by that means the prophecy, *Isa. ix. 1.* was fulfilled, which declares, that in that dark part of the country, the Messiah, the true light, should shine forth. Learn hence, 1. That a people destitute of the saving knowledge of the gospel are in great darkness, how great soever the light of their outward comforts may be. This people had natural light enough, and civil light enough; they had an abundance of wealth and riches, peace and plenty; but they wanted the light of Christ and his gospel, and therefore are said to sit in darkness. 2. That wherever the gospel is preached amongst a people, it is a light springing up and shining forth among them; quickening and enlivening, reviving and cheering, the souls of those who entertain it, how great soever their outward darkness and distress may be. *The people that sat in darkness saw great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up, &c.*

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Here our Saviour begins to enter upon his prophetic office, and by preaching to make known the will of God to mankind; and observe, the doctrine which he preached is the same that John the Baptist did preach, namely, the doctrine of repentance, *Repent ye*: and the argument is the same also, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*: that is, now is the so much expected time of the appearing of the promised Messiah. Learn hence, That the doctrine of Christ and his ambassadors is alike, and the same in substance: they both teach the doctrine of repentance to a lost world, as most suitable to the time and dispensation of the gospel.

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him. 21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them. 22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Our blessed Saviour, as he was the great prophet of his church, had power and authority to appoint teachers under him; and accordingly here he begins to call his apostles to that great work; and in his call we have several particulars very observable: as, 1. The meanness of the persons whom he calls, illiterate fishermen; not a Paul, that had long studied at the feet of Gamaliel, is first called; but Peter, who was a stranger to eloquence and human learning. Hereby our Saviour took effectual care that his gospel should be known to be the power of God, and not the wisdom and device of man; and that the instrument should not carry away the glory of the work. Observe, 2. How our Saviour calls his apostles by couples, two and two, Peter and Andrew, James and John; to let us understand, that the work of the ministry requires the concurrence of all hands that are called to it; all the ministers of God should put their hands, join their hearts, and set their shoulders, as one

man, to this great work; and all little enough to carry it on with advantage and success. Observe, 3. The work which they were called to, from being fishermen to being *fishers of men*. They caught fish before with the labour of their hands; they shall catch men now with the labour of their tongues. Observe, 4. Our Saviour's command; first to follow him, before they are sent out by him: *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*. We must be Christ's disciples before we are his ministers; his followers before his ambassadors. We must learn Christ before we preach him; otherwise we may fish for a livelihood, for honour and applause, but not for souls: if we be not first inclosed ourselves in the net of the gospel, we can have but small hopes of bringing in others. Observe, 5. The promise which Christ gives the apostles for their encouragement: 1. To qualify them, *I will make you fishers*. 2. To succeed them, *I will make you fishers of men*. Faithfulness and care, diligence and endeavour, is our part: but the blessing and success is Christ's. "Our labour is only in the cast, Christ's power is wholly in the draught. Some fish cleave to the rocks, others play upon the sands, and more wallow in the mud; and we shall labour all our days and catch nothing, if Christ doth not bring our fish to the net, and inclose them in it, as well as assist us in the throwing of it."—*Bp. Hall*. Observe, 6. The apostles' ready compliance with our Saviour's call, *Straightway they followed him*. Whom Christ calls, he calls persuasively and effectually; whom he calls, he draws, and works them to a willing compliance with their duty. Lastly observe, Upon their call to the ministry they leave off their trade, they forsake their ship and their nets, and lie close to their ministerial employment. Teaching us, that the ministers of the gospel should wholly give themselves to their work, and not encumber themselves with secular affairs: nothing but an indispensable necessity in providing for a family can excuse a minister's entangling himself with worldly business.

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Our Saviour having called Peter, James,

Andrew, and John, to be disciples in order to their being apostles to preach the gospel, in the foregoing verses; this verse acquaints us how he went himself along with them in the work: he did not send them forth as his curates to labour, and lie at home himself upon his couch at ease. What shall we say to those lazy fishermen who can set others to the drag, and care only to feed themselves with the fish, not willing to wet their hands with the net? Our blessed Saviour, when he sent forth his apostles, went along with them, and laboured himself as much as any of them.

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Observe here, 1. That although our Saviour's doctrine needed no confirmation beyond his own authority, yet he was graciously pleased to exert the power of his godhead in working miracles for the establishment of our faith. Observe, 2. That the miracles which Christ wrought were not judicial, but beneficial to mankind, Moses' miracles were as great judgments as wonders; but Christ's miracles were salubrious and healing, full of goodness and compassion, and very advantageous to the world: he dispossessed devils, healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. O blessed Saviour! thy life in all-instances was a life of universal serviceableness and beneficialness to all mankind.

25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

Observe here, How affecting our Saviour's ministry was at first: multitudes throng after him; they come from all parts to attend upon his ministry, when he first began to preach among them. His ministers find it thus also; at their first coming amongst a people, their labours are most acceptable, and they do most good: our people's affections are then warmest, and our own zeal perhaps is then greatest. Happy is that minister that improves all

opportunities and advantages for the good of souls: "for he that winneth souls is wise."

#### CHAP. V.

This chapter and the two next following contain Christ's famous sermon upon the mount, which comprehends the sum and substance both of the Old and New Testament. Our Saviour begins this his sermon with a declaration who are blessed: including an exhortation to duty, and annexes a reward to the performance of that duty. By this sermon the christian world will be judged in the last day; and by the particulars of it we must either stand or fall.

AND seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Observe here, 1. The preacher; *he*, that is, Christ, the great Prophet and Teacher of his church. Observe, 2. The place where he preached, upon a *mountain*; probably for convenience to himself, and advantage to his auditors; though some will have a mystery in it; that as the law at first was given on a mountain, so Christ would now explain it upon a mountain; or to show the sublimity of his doctrine and precepts. Observe, 3. The posture in which he preached, sitting: *When he was set, he taught*, according to the custom of the Jewish doctors who sat, to show their authority. Observe, 4. The sermon itself, which begins with beatitudes and blessings, and is accompanied with promises of reward. Not as the law was delivered on Mount Sinai, with threatenings and thunder, with fire and earthquake, but in a still and soft voice. Our Lord's lips are full of grace, they drop as the honey-comb. Blessings and promises are our encouragements to obedience.

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Observe here, 1. It is not said, *blessed are the poor in estate*, but *blessed are the poor in spirit*: 'tis not a poverty of purse and possession, but a poverty of spirit, that entitles us to the blessing. 2. 'Tis not said, *blessed are the spiritually poor*, but, *blessed are the poor in spirit*: he that is destitute of the grace and spirit of Christ, that has no sense of his spiritual wants, he is spiritually poor, but he is not *poor in spirit*. Farther, 3. 'Tis not said, *blessed are the poor-spirited*, but, *the poor in spirit*. Such as act below and beneath themselves as men and as christians, these are poor-spirited men; but these are not

*poor in spirit.* 4 'Tis not said, *blessed are they that make themselves poor*, by leaving their estates and callings, and turning beggars, as some do among the Papists; but, *blessed are they whom the gospel makes poor*, by giving them a sight of their spiritual wants and necessities, and directing them to Christ, that they may be made rich. In sum, not those that are poor in estate, or those whom the world has made poor in possession, but those whom the gospel has made poor in spirit, that is, the truly humble, lowly spirits, have a right and title to the kingdom of heaven. Now humility is called poverty of spirit, because it is the effect and fruit of God's Spirit.

4 Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.

Observe here, 1. That mourning for sin is a gospel-duty : the law allows no place for repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears. Observe, 2. The time and season for this duty. *Blessed are they that now mourn.* Sorrow for sin is physic on earth, but 'tis food in hell. Repentance is here a grace, but there a punishment. 3. As mourning goes before comfort, so comfort shall follow after mourning. Our godly sorrow for our own and others' sins, shall end in everlasting joy and comfort.

5 Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.

Observe here, 1. The grace and duty recommended, *meekness*. 2. The wages and reward belonging to that grace and duty, *the inheritance of the earth*. Meekness either respects God, or our neighbour. As it respects God, so it implies flexibility to his commanding will, and submissiveness to his providential pleasure. As it respects our neighbour, it consists in forgiving injuries, bearing reproaches, and recompensing good for evil. The reward and blessing ensured to this grace and duty is, *the inheritance of the earth*, where heaven is not excluded, but included; yet the earth is mentioned, to show that men should be no losers by their meekness, as to their outward estates; for Almighty God will make good to them whatever they lose for peace sake. O happy temper of mind, that at once secures heaven and earth to boot! *Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth* in this life, and heaven in the next.

6 Blessed are they which do hun-

ger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.

Observe, 1. The character of the persons whom Christ pronounces *blessed*; such as *hunger and thirst after righteousness*. 2. Wherein their *blessedness* doth consist : *They shall be filled.* By *righteousness* we are to understand, 1. A *righteousness of justification*; the righteousness of the Mediator imputed to us, by which we stand righteous in God's sight, being freed from condemnation. 2. A *righteousness of sanctification*, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to act righteously. By the former, there is a relative change in our condition; by the latter, a real change in our constitution. 1. Learn, That all and only such as do spiritually hunger and thirst after Christ and his righteousness, are in a happy and blessed condition. 2. That to hunger and thirst after holiness is to apprehend the worth of it, to be sensible of the want of it, to be desirous of it, and restless in endeavours after it, as men usually do that are pinched with hunger. *Dr. Hammond's Prac. Catech.*

7 Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.

Here our blessed Redeemer recommends to us a compassionate regard towards the miseries of others, and that both in soul and body, name and estate; to be forward to pity and pardon, to relieve and help, to give and forgive. And as an encouragement, he adds, that as we deal with others, God will deal with us; our charity towards men shall be crowned with mercy from God, and that in abundance too; for our rivulet of charity we shall partake of an ocean of mercy : *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Learn, That the merciful man is a blessed man, and therefore blessed because he shall obtain mercy, when he most wants it, and most desires it. Mercy, not wages.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

Note here, 1. The duty required and called for, *purity of heart and life*; the first expressed, the other included; for a clean heart will be accompanied with a clean life. Where there is a principle of grace within, there will be the acting of grace without. Note, 2. The incentive to this duty; the *pure in heart*, and *holy in life*, shall see and enjoy God; the infinitely

pure and perfectly holy God. They shall see him spiritually and mediately in this life, gloriously and immediately in the life to come.

9 *Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.*

Observe, 1. The connection between peace and purity : purity of heart and peaceableness of life accompany one another. There is no inward purity where there is not an endeavour after outward peace. 2. The duty exhorted to, namely, to love peace, and to labour after peace ; to love it ourselves, and promote it amongst others ; to be not only *peaceable*, but *peace-makers*. Note, 4. The title of honour that is here put upon such as are of this peaceable and peace-making temper : they shall be called the *children of God* ; that is, they shall be reputed and esteemed God's children, for their likeness to him who is the *God of peace*. And they shall be dignified and honoured with the privileges of *God's children* ; namely, grace here, and glory hereafter.

10 *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11 *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.* 12 *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Note here, 1. That all the disciples and followers of Christ, live they never so holily and inoffensively in the world, yet must they expect suffering and persecution. 2. That the keenest and sharpest edge of persecution is usually turned against the ministers of Christ, and falls heaviest on the prophets of God. 3. That such sufferings and persecutions as will afford a man solid comfort, and entitle him to real blessedness, must be endured and undergone for *righteousness' sake*. 4. That it is the will and command of Christ, that those which suffer for him, and for *righteousness' sake*, should not only be meek and patient, but joyous and cheerful ; *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad*. 5. That such a patient and cheerful suffering of persecution for Christ in this life, shall certainly be rewarded with the glory and blessedness of

the life that is to come. *Great is your reward, &c.*

13 *Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

Our Saviour compares christians in general, and his ministers in particular, unto *salt*, for a double reason, First, Because it is the nature of salt to preserve things from corruption and putrefaction, and to render them savoury and pleasant. Thus are the ministers of the gospel to labour and endeavour, by the purity of their doctrine, to sweeten putrefying sinners, that they may become savoury unto God and man ; and may be kept from being fly-blown with errors and false doctrine. Secondly, Because salt has a piercing power in it, which subdues the whole lump, and turns it into its own nature : such a piercing power is there in the ministry of the word, that it subdues the whole man to the obedience of itself. As if Christ had said, "Ye are to be preachers and patterns to the world ; ye are appointed by your pure doctrine, and good conversation, to purge the world from that corruption in which it lies ; but if you lose either soundness of doctrine, or the savour of a good conversation, you will be wholly useless, as to these great ends, and must expect to be cast off by me, as unsavoury salt is cast to the dunghill."

14 *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.* 15 *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.* 16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's doctrine. 2. The inference which he draws from it, by way of application. The doctrine delivered is this, That christians in general, and the ministers of the gospel in particular, are the *light of the world*. But how ? Not originally, but derivatively ; not efficiently, but instrumentally. Christ himself is the *light of the world* by way of original ; his ministers are *lights* by way of derivation and participation from him. Farther,



Christ teaches them the end why he communicated light unto them, namely, to enlighten, direct, and quicken others; even as the sun in the firmament, and a candle in the house, diffuses and disperses its light to all that are within the reach of it; so should all christians, and particularly Christ's ministers, by the light of life and doctrine, direct people in their way towards heaven. Observe, 2. The inference which our Saviour draws from the foregoing doctrine, *ye are the light of the world*; therefore *let your light so shine before men*. Where note, 1. That our *good works* must shine, but not blaze; all vain-glory and ostentation must be avoided in the good works we do. 2. Although we must abound in good works, that men may see them, yet not to be seen of men. 3. That the glorifying of God, and doing good to mankind, must be the great end we propound in all the good works which we perform.

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Our Saviour here informs his followers, That he had no design to abrogate any part of the *moral law*, or to loose mankind from the least measure of their duty, either towards God or man, but that he came to *fulfil it*. 1. By yielding a personal obedience to it. 2. By giving a fuller and stricter interpretation of it, than the Pharisees were wont to give; for they taught that the law did only reach the outward man, and restrain outward actions. As if Christ had said, "Though I preach a more special doctrine than is contained even in the letter of the moral law, yet think not that I came to destroy or dissolve the obligation of that law, for I came to fulfil the types and predictions of the prophets, and to give you the full sense and spiritual import of the moral law."

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Another reason is here given by our Saviour why he had no intention to abrogate or abolish the law; and that is drawn from the duration and perpetuity, the unchangeableness and immutability, of the law: sooner shall heaven and earth be abolished, than the authority and obligation of the moral law be dissolved. Learn,

1. That the law of God is an eternal and unchangeable rule of life and manners, and is to stand in force as long as the world stands, and the frame of heaven and earth endures. Learn, 2. That christianity is not contrary to the laws by which mankind had formerly been obliged. Christ commands nothing that the natural or moral law had forbidden, and forbids nothing that they had commanded, but has perfected the law, and set it higher than any of the most studied doctors did think themselves formerly obliged by it. To suppose that Christ has added to the moral precepts of the first table, is to suppose that he has added to perfection; for that required the Jew to love God with all his heart, soul, and strength; which is the same that Christ requireth of us christians here. Nor has Christ added to the duties of the second table, since that requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, which St. Paul tells us, *Rom. xiii. 9.* is the fulfilling of the law.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

To evidence yet farther that the moral law is a perfect rule of life, our Saviour tells his disciples, that if any of them did, either by their doctrine or practice, make void any one of the least of God's commands, either by allowing themselves in the omission of any known duty, or in the commission of any known sin, they should never enter into the kingdom of God. Learn, That such a professor of christianity as allows himself in the least voluntary transgression, either of omission or commission, and encourages others by his example to do the like, is certainly in a state of damnation.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the *righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Observe here, 1. A glorious prize or reward set before the christian as attainable, namely, *The kingdom of heaven*. Observe, 2. The means required in order to our obtaining this prize, and laying hold of this reward; we must be holy and righteous persons; heaven is the reward of righteous-

ness, a reward conferred only upon righteous persons. Observe, 3. Here is the special qualification of that righteousness expressed which will entitle us to heaven and salvation: it must be a righteousness which *exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, and that these three ways: 1. In its principle and motive; love to God, and obedience to his command; not the applause and commendation of men. 2. In its aim and end. The pharisees made themselves, their own credit and esteem, their worldly gain and interest, their ultimate end; and not God's glory their supreme aim. 3. In the manner of performance; the Pharisees' duty wanted that purity and spirituality which the law of God required. They had respect only to the outward action, without any regard to the inward intention, and to that purity of heart which God required. *Quest.* In what things are we to exceed the scribes and Pharisees? *Ans.* In sincerity, or by being that within which we seem to be without. In simplicity, or having holy ends in our religious actions. In humility, or having low and humble thoughts of ourselves and our best performances. In charity, or having compassion on all distressed persons. In universality of obedience to all commands. Learn, That holiness of heart, and righteousness of life, which God's law requires of us, is absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation.

21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, *Thou shalt not kill*: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell-fire.

Here our blessed Saviour begins to expound the spiritual sense and meaning of the law, and to vindicate it from the corrupt glosses of the Pharisees; where observe, Christ doth not deliver a new law, but expounds the old; doth not enjoin new duties, but enforces the old ones. The law of God was always perfect, requiring the sons of men to love God with all their hearts, and their neighbour as themselves. In this exposition of the law, Christ begins

with the sixth commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*: where he shows, that besides the actual taking away of life, a person may violate that command; 1. By rash anger. 2. By disgraceful and reviling words. Thence learn, That every evil motion of our hearts consented to against our neighbour, all unjust anger towards him, all terms of contempt put upon him, are forbidden by the law of God, no less than the gross act of murder itself. Learn, 2. That wrath and anger without just cause hath its degrees; and accordingly to the degrees of the sin will the degrees of punishment be proportioned in the next world. Learn, 3. That self-murder is here forbidden, and in no case lawful, man having no more power over his own life than over another's: though life be never so miserable and painful, yet must we wait God's time for our dismissal and release.

23 Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. 25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

For preventing the sin of rash anger, which in our Saviour's account is a degree of murder, he exhorts all his disciples and followers to brotherly agreement, and to seek mutual reconciliation with each other. *Agree with thine adversary*, that is, thy offended or offending brother; agree with him, as becomes a man; quickly, as becomes a christian; implying, that it is a necessary duty for every christian to seek reconciliation sincerely and speedily with such as have offended him, or have been offended by him. Observe, 2. The argument or motive with which Christ enforces his exhortation to brotherly reconciliation, drawn from the peril and danger of the neglect; and this is twofold: The first respects our present duties and services, when we wait upon God at his altar, and attend

upon him in holy offices. None of our performances will find acceptance with God, if there be found malice and hatred, anger and ill-will, against our brother. Learn, that no sacrifice we can offer will be acceptable to God, so long as we ourselves are implacable to men. A second danger respects us, when we appear before God in judgment; then God will be our Adversary, Christ our Judge, Satan our accuser, bell our tormentor; *If now from the heart we do not every one forgive our brother his trespasses.* Lord! how heinous then is this sin of inveterate anger, hatred, and malice, in our hearts, against any person! No gifts, though never so costly, no devotions, though never so specious, will prevail with God to pass it by, whilst we live: and if we die with hearts full of this rancour and bitterness, we can never expect to be encircled in the arms of Him who is all love, all mercy, all goodness and compassion: no reconciliation with God without an hearty good-will to all men. Nay farther, the text here speaks of a prison, which is the dreadful dungeon of hell, into which the implacable and unreconciled person must be cast, and lie for ever without mixture of pity: and it is not men's scoffing at it that will secure them against the horror of it.

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Our Saviour next proceeds to explain the seventh commandment, which forbids adultery; by which the Pharisees understood only the gross act of uncleanness, and carnal lying with a woman. But, says our Saviour, Whosoever secretly in his heart desires such a thing, and casts his eyes upon a woman in order to such an act, entertaining only a thought of it with pleasure and delight, he is an adulterer in God's account. Learn, That such is the purity and spirituality of the law of God, that it condemns speculative wantonness, no less than practical uncleanness; and forbids not only the outward action, but the secret purpose and intention, and first out-goings of the soul after unlawful objects.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from

thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Our Saviour had condemned ocular adultery in the foregoing verse, or the adultery of the eye; *He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her in his heart.* Whence note, That the eye is an inlet to sin, especially the sin of uncleanness: lust enters the heart at the window of the eye. Now in these verses Christ prescribes a remedy for the cure of this eye-malady: *If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out:* which is not to be understood literally, as if Christ commanded any man to maim his bodily members; but spiritually, to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eye, which otherwise would prove a dangerous snare to the soul, Learn, 1. That sin may be avoided: it is our duty to avoid whatsoever leads to it, or may be an occasion of it; if we find the view of an ensnaring object will inflame us, we must, though not put out our eye, yet make a covenant with our eye that we will not look upon it. Note, 2. That the best course we can take to be kept from the outward acts of sin, is to mortify our inward affection and love to sin. This is to kill it in the root; and if once our inward affections be mortified, our bodily members may be spared and preserved; for they will no longer be weapons of sin, but instruments of righteousness unto holiness.

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32 But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.

Our blessed Saviour still proceeds in vindicating and clearing the seventh commandment from the corrupt glosses of the Pharisees. Almighty God had tolerated the Jews, in case of uncleanness, to put

away their wives by a bill of divorce, *Deut. xxiv. 1.* Hereupon the Pharisees maintained it lawful to put away the wife upon every slight occasion. This abuse Christ corrects; and shows that divorce, except in case of adultery, is a certain breach of the seventh commandment. Learn, 1. That so indissoluble is the marriage-covenant betwixt two persons, that nothing but adultery, which violates the bands of marriage, can dissolve or disannul it. Learn, 2. When persons are unjustly put away, it is unlawful for them to marry to any other, or for others knowingly to marry to them.

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black:

The next commandment which our Saviour expounds and vindicates, is the third, which requires a reverent use of God's name. Now the Pharisees taught that perjury was the only breach of this commandment; and that swearing was nothing, if they did not forswear themselves; and that persons were only obliged to swear by the name of God in public courts of justice, but in their ordinary and common discourse they might swear by any of the creatures. Now, in opposition to these wicked principles and practices, Christ says, *Swear not at all*: that is, 1. Swear not profanely in your ordinary discourse. 2. Swear not unduly by any of the creatures; for that is to ascribe a deity to them. 3. Swear not lightly upon any trifling or frivolous occasion; for oaths upon small occasions are great sins. So that an oath is not here forbidden by our Saviour, but restrained. For though light and needless, common and ordinary swearing, be a very great sin, yet to take an oath upon a solemn occasion, when lawfully called thereunto, is a christian and necessary duty. Christ by this prohibition doth not forbid all swearing as a thing absolutely evil; nor doth he forbid all assertory or promissory oaths in matters testimonial, when imposed

by the magistrate; for Christ himself, when adjured by the high-priest, did answer upon oath. But he forbids all voluntary oaths in common conversation, and in our ordinary discourse; because an oath is an act of religious worship: therefore to trifle with it is an horrid provocation.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.

Here our Lord prescribes a proper mean and remedy for shunning the occasion and danger of rash swearing; and that is, by using and accustoming ourselves in conversation to a true simplicity and constant plainness of speech; either affirming or denying, according to the nature of the thing; letting oaths alone till we are called to them upon great occasions, for ending strife between man and man. Learn, That the great end of speech being to communicate the sense of our minds to each other, we ought to use such plainness and simplicity in speaking, that we may believe one another without oaths, or more solemn and religious asseverations.

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Our Saviour here vindicates the sixth commandment, which obliges us to do no wrong to the body of our neighbour. God had given a law to the public magistrate, to require an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, when a person was wronged: hereupon the Pharisees taught, That a private person, wronged by another, might exact satisfaction from him to the same degree in which he had been wronged by him; if he had lost an eye by another, he might revenge it, by taking away the eye of another. But, says Christ, *I say unto you, resist not evil*; that is, seek not private revenge, but leave the avenging of injuries to God and the magistrates; and in trivial matters not to appeal at all, and, when forced, not for revenge sake: teaching us, That christians ought rather to suffer a

double wrong, than to seek a private revenge. Christianity obliges us to bear many injuries patiently, rather than to revenge one privately. Religion indeed doth not bid us invite injuries, but it teaches us to bid them welcome: we are not to return evil for evil, but are rather to endure a greater evil than to revenge a less.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

Our Saviour here presses the law of charity upon his disciples: this is two-fold; a charity in giving to them that beg, and a charity in lending to them that desire to borrow. Christianity obliges all those who have ability, to abound in works of charity of all sorts and kinds whatsoever. He that is truly charitable, doth not only give, but lends; yea, sometimes lends, looking for nothing again. It is not enough to act charity of one sort, but we must be ready to act it in every kind, and to the highest degree that our circumstances and abilities will admit. Giving is a God-like thing, he is the Giver of every good and perfect gift; he gives before we ask: and we must imitate God in giving; namely, by giving what we give cheerfully, sincerely, discreetly, proportionally, universally, in obedience to God's command, and with an eye at his glory. And there is sometimes as great charity in lending as there is in giving; many a poor family, by our lending them a small matter, may raise themselves into a condition to live comfortably and honestly in the world.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you:

Another corrupt gloss which the Pharisees had put upon the law of God, our Saviour here takes notice of: the law said, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*, Lev. xix. 18. This they interpreted to relate only to their own countrymen, the Jews; concluding, that they might hate all the uncircumcised nations, as enemies. But, saith our Saviour, I require you to love all men; for if enemies must not be shut out of your love, none must. *Love your enemies;*

here the inward affection is required. *Bless them that curse you;* there outward civility and affability is required. *Do good to them that hate you;* here real acts of kindness and charity are commanded to be done by us to our bitterest and most malicious enemies. *Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you;* these are the highest expressions of enmity that can be, calumny and cruelty; yet are we commanded to pray for those that touch us in these two tenderest points, our reputation and our life. Learn, That christianity obliges us to bear a sincere affection towards our most malicious enemies; to be ready upon all occasions to do good unto them, and pray for them.

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

To encourage us to the foregoing duty of loving our enemies, our Saviour propounds the example of God himself to our imitation, *That ye may be the children of your Father;* that is, that you may be known to be the children of your Father which is in heaven, by your likeness to him, and imitation of him. Note, 1. That the best evidence we can have of our divine sonship, is our conformity to the divine nature, especially in those excellent properties of goodness and forgiveness. Note, 2. That God doth good to them that are continually doing evil unto him. Rain and sun, fat and sweet, gold and silver, are such good things as their hearts and houses are filled with, who are altogether empty of grace and goodness.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Yet farther to encourage us to the duty of loving our enemies, Christ assures his disciples that he expects more from them than from others; more than common humanity and civil courtesy towards friends: for even heathens by the light of nature were taught to love those that love them: but he expected that christianity should teach them better, and lead them farther, *even to love their enemies, and to bless them that curse them.* Note, Love for love is

justice; love for no love is favour and kindness: but love for hatred and enmity is divine goodness; a Christ-like temper, which will render us illustrious on earth, and glorious in heaven. But Lord! how do men confine their love to little sects and parties! and from thence comes that bitterness of spirit of one party towards another; and oh how hard is it to find a christian of a true catholic love and temper!

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

That is, Aim at perfection in all christian virtues and divine graces, but particularly in this of love; in imitation of your heavenly Father, who is the perfect Pattern of all desirable goodness, and adorable perfections. *To be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect*, is indeed impossible, as to equality, but not as to imitation. The word rendered here *perfect*, by St. Matthew, is elsewhere, by St. Luke, rendered *merciful*, Luke vi. 36. implying, That charity is the perfection of a christian's graces; he that is made perfect in love, is perfect in all divine graces, in the account of God. Learn, 1. That there is no standing still in religion, but he that will be saved must press on towards perfection. Learn, 2. That no less than perfect and complete perfection in grace, and particularly in the grace and love of charity, is and ought to be the aim of every christian in this life, and shall be his attainment in the next.

#### CHAP. VI.

This chapter is a continuation of our Saviour's incomparable sermon upon the mount, in which he cautions his disciples against the hypocrisy and vain-glory of the Pharisees, both in their almsgiving and prayers; the former in the first four verses of this chapter, which speak thus:

**T**AKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; 4 That *thine* alms may be in secret: and thy Fa-

ther, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

Observe here, 1. The duty directed to, alms-giving after a right manner; *Do not your alms before men*: some copies read it, *Do not your righteousness before men*; because alms-giving is a considerable part of that righteousness and justice which we owe unto our neighbour; he that is uncharitable, is unjust: acts of charity are acts of justice and equity. It also intimates to us, That the matter of our alms should be goods righteously gotten: to give alms of what is gotten unjustly, is robbery, and not righteousness. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's cautionary direction in giving alms, *Take heed that you do them not to be seen of men*. It is one thing to do our alms that men may see them, and another thing to do them that we may be seen of men. We ought to do alms before men, that God may be glorified: but not to be seen of men, that ourselves may be applauded. Observe, 3. The particular sin which our Saviour warns his disciples against in giving their alms, namely, ostentation and vain-glory, which the Pharisees were notoriously guilty of; *sounding a trumpet*, to call people about them when they gave their alms. Thence learn, That the doing any good work, especially any work of charity and mercy, vain-gloriously, and not with an eye to God's glory, will certainly miss of the reward of well-doing in another world. Observe, 4. The advice given by our Saviour for the prevention of this sin and danger; and that is, to do our alms as secretly as we can; *Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth*; that is, conceal it from thy nearest relations, and, if possible, from thyself. Note thence, That the secrecy of our charity is one good evidence of its sincerity. Hence the Egyptians made the emblem of charity to be a blind boy reaching out honey to a bee that had lost her wings.

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in

secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Here our Saviour warns his disciples against the same pharisaical hypocrisy in praying, which he had before reproved in almsgiving. It was lawful to pray in the synagogues, and to pray standing, and that before men ; but to do this upon design to be applauded by men, is condemned by Christ. Our business in prayer lies with God, we are not to concern ourselves how men like our performances, it is sufficient if God doth approve and will accept them. To cure the foregoing vanity, Christ directs to secret prayer in our closets, where God is the Witness, and will be the Rewarder, of our sincerity. Note, That secret prayer is a commanded and encouraged duty, and when in sincerity performed shall be attended with a public and glorious reward : *Pray to thy Father which is in secret, &c.*

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do : for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

A vain-glorious ostentation in prayer was condemned by our Saviour in the former verse ; here a vain-glorious multiplication of words, by idle tautologies and impertinent repetitions, is condemned also ; after the manner of the heathen, who expect to have their prayers granted by God for the multiplicity of words used by themselves. Hence note, That a christian's business in prayer being not to inform God, (*for he knoweth what things we need, before we ask him ;*) nor yet to move and persuade God, (*for he is our Father :*) it certainly argues an undue apprehension of God, when we lengthen out our prayers with vain repetitions and a multitude of words. Yet note, 1. That it is not all repetition of the same words in prayer which Christ here condemns, for he himself prayed thrice, using the same words, that the cup might pass from him. Nor, 2. Are we to apprehend that prayers continued to a considerable length are forbidden by Christ ; for Solomon's prayer was such, 1 *Kings* viii. Nehemiah's such, chap. ix. 'Tis said the people confessed and worshipped for three hours : Christ continued in prayer all night ; and the church, *Acts* xii. made

prayers without ceasing for St. Peter's enlargement. And weread of St. Paul's praying night and day, 1 *Thess.* iii. 10. and of his commanding the churches to be instant in prayer, and to continue in prayer. But Christ here condemns prayers lengthened out upon an apprehension that we shall be heard for our much speaking, or can move God by arguments whilst we continue in our sins. *Dr. Whitby.*

9 After this manner therefore pray ye :—

As if Christ had said, For preventing these and all other faults in prayer, I will myself give you a complete form of prayer, and an exact pattern and platform for your imitation when you pray. Note, That the Lord's Prayer is both a perfect form of prayer which ought to be used by us, and also a pattern and platform, according to which all our prayers ought to be framed. St. Matthew says, *After this manner pray ye :* St. Luke says, *When ye pray, say,*

—Our Father which art in heaven ; Hallowed be thy name : 10 Thy kingdom come : Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven : 11 Give us this day our daily bread : 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

The sense and signification of this best of prayers, is this : ' O thou our Father in Jesus Christ ! who remainest in thy throne in heaven, and art there perpetually praised, and perfectly obeyed by glorious angels and glorified saints ; grant that thy name may be glorified, thy throne acknowledged, and thy holy will obeyed, here on earth below, by us thy sons and servants, most sincerely and readily, and in some proportion to what is done in heaven. And because, by reason of the frailty of our natures, we cannot subsist without the comforts and supports of life, we crave, that such a proportion of the good things of this life may be given unto us, as may be sufficient for us ; and that we may be content with our allowance. And knowing that thy holiness and justice oblige thee to punish sin and sinners, we plead with thee, for the sake of thy Son's satisfaction, to pardon to us our daily

trespasses, which we are guilty of in this state of imperfection ; as we do freely and heartily forgive others that have offended and wronged us. And seeing that by reason of the frailty of our natures we are prone to rush upon and run into temptation ; we crave that, by the power of thy omnipotent grace, we may be kept from Satan's temptations, from the world's allurements, from our own evil inclinations, and be preserved unblamable to thine everlasting kingdom ; which is extended over all persons, over all places, over all things, in all times, past, present, and to come : and accordingly, in testimony of our desires, and in assurance to be heard and answered, we say, Amen ; so be it ; so let it be, even so, O Lord, let it be for ever.' More particularly, in this comprehensive and compendious prayer, the following severals are remarkable. Namely, 1. That the learned observe, that this prayer is taken out of the Jewish liturgies, in which it is entirely found, excepting these words, *As we forgive them that trespass against us.* From whence Grotius notes, how far Christ the Lord of his church was from affecting novelties, or despising any thing because it was a form ; a piece of pious weakness amongst some at this day. Observe, 2. The person to whom Christ directs us to make our prayers ; namely, to God, under the notion of a Father ; teaching us, that in all our religious addresses to God, we are to conceive of him, and pray unto him, under the notion and relation of a Father. *Our Father, &c.* So is he by creation, by a right of providence and preservation, by redemption, by outward and visible profession, by regeneration and adoption ; and this relation which God stands in to us, may encourage us to pray unto him ; for being our Father, we are sure that he is of easy access unto, and graciously ready to grant what we pray for. And whereas it is added, *which art in heaven* ; this is not to be so understood as if his essence were included, or his presence circumscribed or confined there, for he fills heaven and earth with the immensity of it : but he is said to be so in heaven, because there is the special manifestation of his presence, of his purity, of his power and glory, and teaches us with what holy fear, with what humble reverence, and not without a trembling veneration, polluted dust ought to make their solemn approaches to the God of heaven. Observe, 3. That the three first petitions relate more immediately

to God. 1. That his *name may be hallowed.* By the name of God, understand God himself, as made known to us in his attributes, words, and works. This name is hallowed or sanctified by us three ways ; by our lips, when we acknowledge his divine perfections, and tell of all his wondrous works ; in our hearts, by entertaining suitable conceptions of God ; and in our lives, when the consideration of these divine perfections engages us to suitable obedience. 2. That his *kingdom may come* : by which we are not to understand his general and providential kingdom, by which he ruleth over all the world, that being always come, and capable of no farther amplification ; but principally the kingdom of grace, promoted in the hearts of his people by the preaching of the gospel : we pray that God would dethrone sin and Satan in our own and others' souls, and increase grace and sanctification both in us and them, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened, and we may be preserved blameless to the coming of Christ in his kingdom. 3. That his *will may be done* ; by which the preceptive rather than the providential will of God, is to be understood : we are to obey the former universally, and to submit to the latter very cheerfully. It intimates, that it ought to be the prayer and care, the study and endeavour, of every christian, that the commanding will of God may be so done by men upon earth, as it is by the glorified saints and glorious angels done in heaven ; namely, with that alacrity and cheerfulness, with that speed and readiness, with that constancy and diligence, that the imperfection of human nature will admit of ; imitating the blessed angels, who execute the divine commands without reluctance or regret. Observe, 4. The three last petitions respect ourselves, as the three former did Almighty God. The first of which is a prayer for temporal blessings : *give us this day our daily bread.* Where note, The mercy prayed for, *bread*, which comprehends all the comforts and conveniences of life, and whatever is necessary for the supporting human nature. Also the qualification ; it must be our own bread, not another's, what we have a civil right to as men, and a covenant right to as christians. Note farther, The kind of bread we ask and desire ; it is *daily* bread. Hereby we are put in mind of our continual dependence upon God for our lives, and for all the supports of life which we enjoy, and also kept



in mind of our mortality. And mark the way and manner of conveying all good things to us, it is in a way of free-gift. *Give us our daily bread*, we cannot give it ourselves; and when we have it of God, we receive it not as a debt, but as a free gift. The next petition is for spiritual blessings, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*. Where: note, 1. Some things supposed, namely, That we are all sinners, and, as such, stand in need of pardon and forgiveness. 2. That our sins are debts, wilful debts, repeated debts, innumerable debts, inexcusable debts, debts difficultly discharged, and yet, if undischarged, undoing debts. 3. That we are obliged to pray every day for daily pardon, as we do for daily bread, for our sins are many and daily. 4. It is here supposed, that since we are to pray for forgiveness of sin, it is impossible ever to satisfy the justice of God for sin. Lastly note, The condition or qualification required, *forgive as we forgive*: This requires, 1. That our minds be full of charity, free from rancour and ill-will, and all desires of revenge, and a secret grudge against another. 2. That we stand ready to help them, and to do any office of love and service for them that have offended us. 3. That we admit our offending brother into friendship and familiarity, which is called a *forgiving him from the heart*: our heart must be towards him as formerly it was. The sixth and last petition follows, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. Here note, A double mercy prayed for; namely, preventing mercy, and delivering mercy. 1. Preventing mercy, *lead us not into temptation*. Hereby it is supposed, 1. That we are unable to keep ourselves from temptation, partly through our natural depravity, partly through carnal security. 2. That it is God that must keep us from Satan's assaults, his traps and snares, which every where he lays in ambush for us. 3. That it is our own daily duty to be earnest and instant with God in prayer, not to suffer us by the subtraction of his grace, or in a way of punishment for sin, to run into the circumstances which may prove snares to us, but daily to afford us such a measure of his grace, as may keep us from falling by temptation, and not leave us falling under the temptation, but recover us speedily by his power, and enable us to stand more firmly for the future. 2. We here pray for delivering mercy. *Deliver us from evil*: by which may be understood Satan the evil one, but especially the evil of sin.

We pray here that God would graciously preserve us from those vicious inclinations of our minds, and evil dispositions of our hearts, which render us so prone to yield to the temptations of Satan. Here we see the ugly and deformed face of sin: it is evil: evil in its author and original, it is of the devil, the evil one; evil in its effects and fruits, it doth debase and degrade us, pollute and defile us, befoul and deceive us, and, without repentance, damns and destroys us. Observe lastly, The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, which contains a complication of arguments to urge Almighty God with, for obtaining the mercy prayed for. 1. *For thine is the kingdom*; thou art the only absolute and rightful Sovereign; and all men are concerned to honour thee; and obey thy laws; thou art the supreme Governor of the world, and King of thy church, therefore let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done. 2. *Thine is the power*, therefore give us daily bread, and forgive our daily sins; for thou hast power to supply the one, and authority to pardon the other. The power of God is a mighty encouragement to prayer, and faith in the power of God has a mighty prevalence in prayer with God. 3. *Thine is the glory*, that is, thine will be the glory; as if we should say, "Lord! by enabling us to hallow thy name by owning thy kingdom, by doing thy will, and by thy providing for us, and pardoning of us, thou wilt have much glory by us and from us." It teaches us, that as our prayers in general ought to be argumentative; so an argument in prayer drawn from the glory of God, is a mighty encouragement to hope for audience and acceptance. 4. *For ever and ever*, that is, thy kingdom is eternal, thy power eternal, thy glory eternal; the God whom we pray to is an eternal God, and this attribute of God is improvable in prayer, as an encouragement to expect the same blessings from God which others have done before us; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. *Amen*: a word used in all languages, denoting an hearty assent to our own prayers, and an hearty desire to receive the mercies prayed for, and an humble assurance that we shall be heard and answered.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

There being no duty to which our corrupt natures are more backward, than this of forgiving injuries, our Saviour repeats that duty over and over, and frequently inculcates it in the holy Gospels; assuring us, that forgiving others is the indispensable condition upon which we are to expect forgiveness from God. Learn thence, That every time we go to God in prayer, and beg forgiveness of him, as we forgive others; if we do not forgive them heartily and sincerely, fully and freely, readily and willingly, we fly in the face of God, and our prayers are a sort of imprecations against ourselves. Note farther, That although God promises us forgiveness if we forgive others; yet it is with this limitation, if no other condition of salvation be wanting, for this virtue alone cannot obtain favour with God, unless other duties are performed.

16 Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

The next duty which our Saviour instructs his disciples in, is that of religious fasting, which is a devoting of the whole man, soul and body, to a solemn and extraordinary attendance upon God, in a particular time, set apart for that purpose; in order to the deprecating of his displeasure, and for the supplicating of his favour, accompanied with an abstinence from bodily food and sensual delights, and from all secular affairs and worldly business. Now our Saviour's direction as to this duty of fasting is double: 1. He cautions us to beware of an abuse in fasting: *Be not as the hypocrites are, of a sad countenance*; that is, Do not affect a sullen sadness, ghastliness, and unpleasantness of countenance, like the hypocritical Pharisees, who vitiate and discolour their faces, and mar and abolish their native complexion. Hypocrisy can paint the face black and sable, as well as pride with red and white. 2. He counsels us to take the right way in fasting; *to anoint the head and wash the face*: that is, to look as at other times, using our ordinary garb and at-

tire, and not to affect any thing that may make us look like mourners, when really we are not so. Where we may note, That though hypocrites, by their dejected countenances and mortified habits, do seek to gain an extraordinary reputation for piety and devotion, yet the sincere christian is to be abundantly satisfied with God's approbation of his services, and with the silent applause of his own conscience.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Observe here, 1. Something implied, namely, That every man has his treasure; and whatsoever or whosoever that treasure is, it is attractive, and draws the heart of a man unto it: for every man's treasure is his chief good. 2. Something permitted; namely, the getting, possessing, and enjoying, of earthly treasure, as an instrument enabling us to do much good. 3. Something prohibited; and that is, the treasuring up of worldly wealth, as our chief treasure: *Lay not up treasures on earth*; that is, take heed of an inordinate affection to, of an excessive pursuit after, of a vain confidence and trust in, any earthly comfort, as your chief treasure. 4. Here is something commanded; *but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*: treasure up those habits of grace, which will bring you to an inheritance in glory: be fruitful in good works, *laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold of eternal life*. Observe, 5. The reasons assigned, 1. Why we should not lay up our treasure on earth; because all earthly treasures are of a perishing and uncertain nature, they are subject to moth and rust, to robbery and theft; the perishing nature of earthly things ought to be improved by us, as an argument to sit loose in our affections towards them. 2. The reason assigned why we should lay up our treasure in heaven, is this: because heavenly treasures are subject to no such accidents and casualties as earthly treasures are, but are durable and lasting. *The things that are not seen are eternal*. The

treasures of heaven are inviolable, incorruptible, and everlasting. Now we may know whether we have chosen these things for our treasure, by our high estimation of the worth of them, by our sensible apprehension of the want of them, by the torrent and tendency of our affection towards them, and by our laborious diligence and endeavours in the pursuit of them. *Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.*

22 The light of the body is the eye : if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light : 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !

In the foregoing verses our Saviour acquainted us what in our affections and judgments we should esteem as our chief treasure : now this judgment, concerning our chief treasure, is by our Saviour here compared to the eye ; as the eye is the candle of the body, that enlightens and directs it, so our understanding and judgment of the excellency of heaven and the things above, will draw our affections towards them, and quicken our endeavours after them. Note thence, That such as our judgment is concerning happiness, such will our desires and endeavours be for the attainment of that happiness. Our affections are guided by our apprehensions : where the esteem is high, endeavours will be strong.

24 No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

Observe here, A two-fold master spoken of, *God and the world*. God is our Master by creation, preservation, and redemption ; he has appointed us our work, and secured us our wages. The world is our master by intrusion, usurpation, and a general estimation ; too many esteeming it as their chief good, and delighting in it as their chief joy. Observe, 2. That no man can serve these two masters, who are of contrary interests, and issue out contrary commands ; when two masters are subordinate, and their commands subservient each to other, the difficulty of serving both is not great : but where commands interfere, and interests clash, it is impossible. No man can serve God and the world, but he may serve God

with the world : no man can seek God and Mammon both as his chief good and ultimate end ; because no man can divide his heart betwixt God and the world. Learn, That to love the world as our chief good, and to serve the world as our chief and sovereign commander, cannot stand with the love and service which we bear and owe to God. The world's slaves, whilst such, can be none of God's freemen.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? 26 Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?

The next sin which our Saviour cautions his disciples against is, immoderate care for the things of this life, such a solicitous and veracious care for food and raiment, as is accompanied with diffidence and distrust of God's fatherly providence over us, and provision for us ; and the arguments which our Saviour uses to dissuade from this sin, are many and cogent, laid down in the following verses. Learn here, 1. That Almighty God will provide for every servant of his, food and raiment, and a competency of the comforts and conveniences of life. Learn, 2. That want of faith in God's promise, and a distrust of his fatherly care, is a God-provoking, and a wrath-procuring sin. Learn, 3. That notwithstanding God's promising to supply our wants, we not only may, but must, use such prudential and provident means as are in our power, in order to the supply of our wants. *Dr. Hammond's Practical Catech.*

27 Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature ? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin : 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, *shall*

he not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Four arguments are here used by our Saviour to dissuade us from the sin of anxious care; 'tis needless, 'tis fruitless, 'tis heathenish, 'tis brutish. 1. 'Tis needless; *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things*, and will certainly provide for you; and what need you take care, and God too? 2. 'Tis fruitless; *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?* That is, by all our solicitous care we can add nothing either to the length or comfort of our lives. 3. 'Tis heathenish; *after all these things do the Gentiles seek.* 3. 'Tis brutish; nay, worse than brutish; *the fowls of the air*, and the beasts of the field, are fed by God; much more shall his children. Has God a breakfast for every little bird that comes chirping out of its nest? and for every beast in the wilderness that comes leaping out of his den? and will he not much more provide for you, O ye of little faith? Surely he that feeds the ravens when they cry, will not starve his children when they pray. Naturalists observe of the raven, that she exposes her young ones as soon as they are hatched, leaves them meatless and featherless, to shift and struggle with hunger as soon as they come into the world; and whether by the dew from heaven, or flies or worms, God feedeth them; when they gape and cry, they are provided for: from whence our Saviour infers, that man being much better, that is, a more considerable creature than the fowls, the providence of God will provide for him, though no solicitude and anxious thoughtfulness of his contributes thereunto.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

That is, Let your first and chief care be to promote the kingdom of grace in this world, and to secure the kingdom of glory in the next, and in order unto both, seek after an universal holiness and righteousness, both of heart and life, and then fear not the want of these outward comforts,

they shall be added in measure, though not in excess; to satisfy, though not to satiate; for health, though not for surfeit. Observe, 1. That christians must here on earth set themselves to seek heaven, or the kingdom of God. 2. That God's kingdom cannot be sought without God's righteousness: holiness is the only way to happiness. 3. That heaven, or the kingdom of God, must be sought in the first place, with our chief care and principal endeavour. 4. That heaven being once secured by us, all earthly things shall be superadded by God, as he sees needful and convenient for us.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Here our Saviour reinforces his debortation from solicitous care for worldly things; assuring us, that every day will bring with it a sufficient burden of trouble, and therefore we ought not to torment ourselves, by antedating our own sorrows, and foretelling what may or may not come to pass. Learn, That it is a painful, sinful, and unprofitable evil, to perplex ourselves with distrustful and distracting fears of what may come upon us: every day has its own duty and difficulty; and though sufferings must be expected, and prepared for, yet we must not torment ourselves to-day with the fears of what may be to-morrow; but every day cast our burden of care upon that God who daily careth for us.

#### CHAP. VII.

Our blessed Saviour having continued his sermon on the mount in the former chapter, concludes it in this, with an exhortation to several duties; the first of which is, to forbear rash judging of others.

**JUDGE** not, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Observe here, The prohibition, and the reason of that prohibition. The prohibition, *judge not*: this is not meant of ourselves, but of our neighbour. Self-judging is a great duty; judging others, a grievous sin; yet is not all judging of others condemned, but a judging of our neighbour's state or person rashly and rigidly, censoriously and uncharitably; especially unrighteously and unjustly. And the reason of the prohibition is added; if we

judge others rashly, God will judge us righteously. Learn thence, That a rash and censorious judging of others renders a person liable and obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God. Note farther, That Christ doth not here forbid judicial judging by the civil magistrate, nor ecclesiastical judging by the church governors, whose office gives them authority so to do. Nor does he forbid one christian to pass a judgment on the notorious actions of another, seeing the duty of reproof cannot be performed without it; but it is such a rash and censorious judging our brother, as is void of charity towards him, as is accompanied with contempt of him; especially if we have been guilty of the same or greater sins before him.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye: and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

By the *mote in our brother's eye*, is to be understood, small and little sins, or some supposed sins: by the *beam in our own eye*, is meant, some notorious sin of our own. Learn, 1. That those who are most censorious of the lesser infirmities of others, are usually most notoriously guilty of far greater failings themselves. 2. That those who desire others should look upon their infirmities with a compassionate eye, must not look upon the failings of others with a censorious eye. 3. That there is no such way to teach us charity in judging others, as to exercise severity in judging of ourselves.

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

By *that which is holy*, understand, the word and ordinances in general; but admonition and reproof in particular: by *dogs* and *swine*, incorrigible and unreclaimable sinners, hardened scorners of holy things; 'tis a proverbial speech, expressing how sure charitable reprehensions are to be cast away upon incorrigible sinners. Learn, 1. That

'tis possible for sinners to arrive at such a height and pitch in wickedness and sin, that it may be a christian's duty not to admonish or reprove them. Observe, 2. How Christ provides, as for the honour of his word, so for the safety of those that publish it. As Christ will not have his word offered to some sinners, lest they should abuse it; so lest they should abuse those that bring it. When sinners turn rinish swine, and we are in danger of being rent by them, Christ himself gives us a permission to cease reproofing of them.

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Observe here, A precept and a promise; the precept, or duty commanded, is, importunity and constancy in prayer, we must *ask, seek, and knock*: the promise, or mercy ensured, is, *audience and acceptance* with God. Note, 1. That man is a poor, indigent, and necessitous creature, full of wants, but unable to supply them. 2. That God is an all-sufficient Good, able to supply the wants, and to relieve the necessities, of his creatures, if they call upon him, and cry unto him. 3. Yet if we do not presently receive what we ask, we must still continue to seek and knock; though prayer be not always answered in our time, yet it shall never fail of an answer in God's time. 4. The natural propensity which we find in our breasts to hear the desires, and to supply the wants, of our own children, ought to raise in us a confident expectation that Almighty God will hear our prayers, and supply our wants, when we call upon him; if a father will give when a child asks, much more will God. *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, &c.* God loves to be giving, and to give good gifts is his delight.

But prayer is the key that opens both his heart and hand : yet not every person, nor every prayer, shall find acceptance with God : the person praying must be a doer of God's will, *St. John ix. 31.* and not regard iniquity in his heart, nor entertain any grudge against his neighbours ; the matter we pray for must be what is agreeable to God's will, and the manner of our prayer must be in faith, and with fervency, and unfainting perseverance.

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets.

Observe here, 1. An incomparable rule of life ; always to do as we would be done by. Note, That the great rule of righteousness and equity in all our dealings with men is this, *to do as we would be done unto* : it is a short rule, a full rule, and clear rule ; both the light of nature and the law of Christ bind it upon us. Observe, 2. The commendation of this rule, *it is the law and the prophets* ; that is, the sum of the Old Testament, so far as concerns our duty to our neighbour ; and the substance of the second table. Learn, That it is the design of the scriptures of the Old Testament, first, to render men dutiful and obedient to God, and then righteous and charitable one to another. *This is the law of the prophets*, yea, the whole of the law and the prophets, to love God above ourselves, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life ; and few there be that find it.

Observe here, 1. That every man is a traveller in a certain way. 2. That there are but two ways in which the race of mankind can travel ; the one *strait and narrow*, that leads to life and salvation ; the other *broad and wide*, which leads to hell and destruction. 3. That because of the difficulties in the way to salvation, and the easiness of the way to hell and destruction, hence it is that so few walk in the one, and so many in the other. 4. That christians having the strait way to heaven revealed to them, in and by the word of God, should choose rather to go in that way

alone to life, than to run with the multitude in that broad way, which leads down to the chambers of death and hell. 5. That the metaphor of a *gate* denotes our first entrance into a religious course of life, and its being *strait* denotes the difficulty that attends religion at first : evil habits to be put off, old companions in sin to be parted with ; but when faith and patience have once smoothed our way, love will make our work delightful to us.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Observe here, 1. A caution given, *Beware of false prophets*. There were two sorts of deceivers which our Saviour gave his disciples a special warning of ; namely, false Christs, and false prophets : false Christs were such as pretended to be the sure Messias ; false prophets were such as pretended to own christianity, but drew people away from the simplicity of the gospel. Observe, 2. The ground of this caution, *they come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves* : that is, they make fair pretences to strictness in religion, and to greater measures and degrees of mortification and self-denial than others. Whence we learn, That such as go about to seduce others, usually pretend to extraordinary measures of sanctity themselves, to raise an admiration amongst those who judge of saints more by their looks than by their lives ; more by their expressions than by their actions. What heavenly looks and devout gestures, what long prayers and frequent fastings, had the hypocritical Pharisees, beyond what Christ or his disciples ever practised ! Observe, 3. The rule laid down by Christ, whereby we are to judge of false teachers ; *By their fruits ye shall know them*. Learn, that the best course we can take to judge of teachers pretend-

ing to be sent of God, is to examine the design and tendency of their doctrines, and the course and tenor of their conversations. Good teachers, like good trees, will bring forth the good fruits of truth and holiness; but evil men and seducers, like corrupt trees, will bring forth error and wickedness in their life and doctrine.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

*Not every one, that is, Not any one, that saith, Lord, Lord, that is, that owneth me by way of profession, by way of prayer, and by way of appeal, shall be saved; but he that doeth the will of my Father, sincerely and universally.* Learn hence, 1. That multitudes at the great day shall be really disowned by Christ as none of his servants, that did nominally own him for their Lord and Master: many that have now prophesied in his name, shall then perish in his wrath: many that have cast out devils now, shall be cast out to devils then: such as have now done many wonderful works, shall then perish for evil workers. Note, 2. That a bare name and profession of christianity, without the practice of it, is a very insufficient ground to build our hopes of heaven and salvation upon. A profession of faith, and purposes of obedience, without actual obedience to the commands of God, will avail no person to salvation. 3. That gifts, eminent gifts, yea, extraordinary and miraculous gifts, are not to be rested in, or depended upon, as sufficient evidences for heaven and salvation. Gifts are as the gold which adorns the temple, but grace is like the temple that sanctifies the gold.

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house;

and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock: 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Christ here speaks of two houses, the one built upon a rock, the other upon the sand; these two houses were alike skilfully and strongly built to outward appearance; while the sun shone, and the weather was fair, none could discern but that the house upon the sand was built as well, and might stand as long, as that on the rock; but when the rain fell, the foundation failed. Thus, where is the hypocrite, with all his faith and fear, with all his show and appearance of grace, in a wet and windy day? His goodly outside is like the apples of Sodom, fair and alluring to the eye, but, being touched, instantly evaporate into dust and smoke. An hypocrite stands in grace no longer than till he fall into trouble; and accordingly our Saviour here concludes his excellent sermon with an elegant similitude. The *wise builder* is not the frequent hearer, but the faithful doer of the word, or the obedient christian; the *house* is heaven, the hope of eternal life; the *rock* is Christ; the *building upon the sand* is resting in the bare performance of outward duties. The *rains*, the *winds*, the *floods*, are all kinds of afflicting evils, sufferings, and persecutions that may befall us. Note, 1. That the obedient believer is the only wise man, that builds his hopes of heaven upon a sure and abiding foundation. Note, 2. That such professors as rest in the outward performance of holy duties, are foolish builders, their foundation is weak and sandy, and all their hopes of salvation vain and uncertain. An outward profession of christianity, though set off by prophesying and doing miracles, will not avail any man towards his account at the great day, without that real and faithful, that universal and impartial obedience to the laws of Christ which the gospel requires.

28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29 For he taught them as

one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Here we have two things observable: 1. The manner of our Lord's teaching, it was with *authority*; that is, it was grave and serious, pious and ardent, plain and profitable. With what brevity, without darkness! with what gravity, without affectation! with what eloquence; without meretricious ornament, were our Lord's discourses! The majesty he showed in his sermons, made it evidently appear that he was a Teacher sent of God, and clothed with his authority. Observe, 2. The success of his teaching: *The people were astonished at his doctrine*: affected with admiration, believing him to be an extraordinary prophet. Learn, That such is the power of Christ's doctrine, when accompanied with the energy of the Holy Spirit, that it makes all the auditors admirers, yea, believers; it causes astonishment in their minds, and reformation in their manners.

#### CHAP. VIII.

This chapter is called by St. Ambrose, *Scriptura Miraculosa*, the *Miraculous Scripture*; there being several great miracles recorded in this chapter: as the cleansing of the leper, the curing of the centurion's servant, the appeasing of the winds, &c. Our Saviour having delivered his doctrine in the former chapters; in this he backs his doctrine with miracles, for the establishment and confirmation of it.

**W**HEN he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. 2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean: And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.

Note here, In general, that the Jews paid civil adoration to their kings, and to their prophets: thus Saul stooped with his face to the ground to Samuel; Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face before Daniel; and Obadiah before Elijah; from whence may be gathered that the adorations given to Christ by them that knew nothing of his divinity, were paid him as a prophet sent from God. Only next, several particulars are here observable; as, 1. The petitioner, and that is

a leper, he came and worshipped Christ, and petitions him to heal him, saying, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Where he discovers a firm belief of Christ's power, but a diffidence and distrust of Christ's will, to heal him. Learn, Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed, by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him. Observe, 2. How readily our Saviour grants his petition: *Jesus touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.* Our Saviour by touching the leper showed himself to be above the law, as God; though subject to the law, as man; for by the ceremonial law the leper was forbidden to be touched. Yet it was a received rule among the Jews, that a prophet might vary from the punctilios of the ceremonial law, or change a ritual law; so did Elijah stretch himself on the dead child, and Elisha on the Shunamite's son, notwithstanding the prohibition of coming near the dead. But Christ's curing the leper by the word of his mouth, and the touch of his hand, showed his divine power, and proved himself to be truly and really sent of God: leprosy being called by the Jews *the finger of God*, a disease of his sending, and of his removing: our Saviour therefore, as a proof of his being the Messiah, tells the disciples of John, *That the lepers were cleansed*, Matt. xi. 5. *and the dead raised*: which being put together, intimates, that the cleansing of the leper is as peculiar an act of divine power as the raising of the dead; and accordingly, 2 Kings v. 7. said the king, *Am I God, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy?* Observe, 3. The certainty and suddenness of the cure; *immediately his leprosy was cleansed*: Christ not only cured him without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ showed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness. Observe, 4. The charge and command given by Christ after the cure, 1. *To tell no man*; wherein the modesty, humility, and piety of Christ, is discovered, together with the care of his own safety. His modesty, in not desiring his good deeds should be proclaimed; his humility, in shunning vain-glorious applause and commendation; his piety, in desiring all the praise, honour, and glory, should redound entirely to God; and his care of his own safety, lest the publishing of this miracle should create him untimely danger from the Pharisees. Chris-



tians, behold your pattern to do much good, and make but little noise. Christ affected no popular air; he did not spoil a good work by vain ostentation. When we work hard for God, take we great care that pride doth not blow either it or us. O how difficult it is to do much service, and not value ourselves too much for the services which we do! The second part of the charge which Christ gave the recovered leper was, *To show himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them*; that is, as a testimony to the Jews that he was the Messiah, and that he did not oppose the ceremonial law given by Moses. Where note, That our Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed, so long as the time for its continuance did endure: though he came to destroy that law, yet whilst it stood he would have it observed. Here Dr. Lightfoot observes, that though the priesthood was much degenerated from its primitive institution by human invention; yet Christ sends the leper to submit to it; because though they did corrupt, yet they did not extinguish, the divine institution.

5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, 6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. 7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. 8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. 9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

The second miracle our Saviour works in this chapter, is the healing of the centurion's servant: where observe, 1. The person that applies to our Saviour for help and healing: he was a Gentile, an heathen, a Roman soldier, an officer and commander; yet he

believes in and relies upon the power of Christ. Note, That such is the freeness of divine grace, that it extends itself to all sorts and ranks, to all orders and degrees of men, without exception. Even the bloody trade of war yields worthy clients to Christ. He doth not so much regard who we are, and whence we are, as what we are, and with what dispositions and inclinations we come unto him. Observe, 2. The person whom the centurion comes to Christ for; not for himself, nor for his son, but for his servant; his servant is sick, he doth not drive him out of doors, nor stand gazing by his bed-side, but looks out for relief for him: a worthy example. Some masters have not so much regard to their sick servants as they have to their oxen or their swine; but he is not worthy of a good servant, that in a time of sickness is not willing to serve his servant. A conceit of superiority must beget in no man a neglect of charitable offices towards inferiors. Observe, 3. Unto whom the centurion seeks, and with what zeal and application: he seeks not to wizards and conjurers, but to the physician, for his poor servant; yea, to Christ, the best Physician: and this not with a formal relation in his mouth, but with a vehement aggravation of the disease: *My servant is grievously tormented*: where the master's condolency and tender sympathy with his afflicted servant is both matter of commendation and imitation also. Observe, 4. The happy mixture of humility and faith which was found in this centurion; he owns his unworthiness of having Christ come under his roof; yet he acknowledged Christ's power, that by speaking of a word his servant might be healed by him. Humility is both the fruit of faith, and the companion of faith; an humble soul has an high esteem of Christ, and a low esteem of himself. Observe, 5. How our blessed Saviour exceeds both his desires and his expectations; Christ says, not only, I will heal him, but, I will come and heal him: wonderful condescension! In St. John, chap. iv. 47. we read of a certain nobleman and ruler, that twice entreated our Saviour to come to his house and heal his son; but our Lord refused, and did not stir a foot; here the centurion doth but barely tell Christ of his poor servant's sickness, and Christ both unasked and undesired says, *I will come and heal him*. O how far was Christ from seeming in the least to honour riches and despise poverty! He that came in the form of a servant, goes down and

visits a sick servant upon his poor pallet-bed, that would not visit the rich couch of the ruler's son. How should we stoop to the lowest offices of love and kindness to one another, when Christ thus condescendingly abased himself before us ! Observe, 6. The notice and observation which our Saviour takes of the centurion's faith ; he wondered at it from him, who had wrought in him. Christ wrought this faith as God, and wondered at it as man : what can be more wonderful than to see Christ wonder ? We do not find our Saviour wondering at worldly pomp and greatness. When the disciples wondered at the magnificence of the temple, Christ rather rebuked them, than wondered with them ; but when he sees the gracious acts of faith, he is ravished with wonder. Let it teach us to place our admiration where Christ fixes his : let us be more affected with the least measure of grace in a good man, than with all the gaieties and glory of a great man ; let us not envy the one, but admire the other.

11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven : 12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way ; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

This was the first occasion that Christ took to speak of the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews. Observe here, That the unbelieving Jews are called the *children of the kingdom*, because born within the pale of the visible church ; they presumed that the kingdom of heaven was entailed upon them, because they were Abraham's seed ; they boasted of and gloried in their external and outward privileges. Note thence, 1. That gospel-ordinances, and church-privileges enjoyed, are a special honour to a people admitted to the participation of them ; our Saviour here styles the Jews upon that account, *the children of the kingdom*. 2. That such privileges enjoyed, but not improved, do provoke Almighty God to inflict the heaviest of judgments upon a people. *The children of the kingdom shall be cast*

*into outer darkness* ; that is, into the darkness of hell, where shall be perpetual lamentation for the remembrance of the gospel kindly offered, but unthankfully rejected.

14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her : and she arose, and ministered unto them.

The next miracle which our Saviour wrought, was, in curing Peter's wife's mother of a fever ; the miracle was not in curing an incurable distemper, but in the way and manner of curing : For, 1. It was by a *touch* of our Saviour's hand. 2. It was instantaneous and sudden ; *immediately the fever left her*. 3. The visible effects of her recovery presently appeared ; *she instantly rose and ministered unto them*. That she could arise, argued her cure miraculous ; that she could and did arise and administer unto Christ, argued her thankfulness, and a great sense of his goodness upon her mind. Note here, 1. That marriage in the ministers of the gospel, yea, even in the apostles themselves, and in Peter, the chiefest of them, was neither censured nor condemned by our Saviour. St. Peter had a wife and family, which Christ condescends to visit. Observe, 2. That the first thing which Christ takes notice of in the house which he condescends to visit, is what aileth any in it ; what need they stand in of his help and healing ; and accordingly, together with his presence, he affords them relief. Learn, 3. That when Christ has graciously visited and healed any of his servants, it ought to be their first work and next care to administer unto Christ ; that is, to employ their recovered health, and improve their renewed strength, in his service : *She arose and ministered*.

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils : and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick : 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

It was very common about the time of our Saviour's coming in the flesh, for the devil bodily to possess persons, and very grievously to torment them. This is one of the

sad and dismal evils which sin has made us liable and obnoxious to, to be bodily possessed by Satan : when we give Satan the power of our hearts, it is a just and righteous thing with God to give him the possession of our bodies. But who is the person that dispossesses Satan ? Christ Jesus : 'tis a stronger than the strong man that must cast out Satan : our Jesus, in whom we trust, by his powerful word alone can deliver from Satan's power, and all the sad effects and consequences thereof. But observe, with what condolency and sympathizing pity he exercises these acts of mercy and compassion towards poor creatures : he is said to take our infirmities upon himself, and to bear our sicknesses ; he bare the guilt which was the cause of these griefs and sorrows ; and he bare the sorrows themselves by a tender sympathy with us under the burden of them. Christ considers our sufferings as our own : he is afflicted in all our afflictions, and pained with all our pains ; in this sense, *he took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. 19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Observe here, a person resolving to follow Christ : a good resolution, if made deliberately, and not rashly ; nor for sinister ends and secular advantages ; which, it is to be feared, was the case here, by the answer which our Saviour gives ; for says he, *Foxes have holes, &c.* that is, my condition in this world is very poor, worse than the birds of the air, for they have their fixed nests ; or the beasts of the earth, for they have their dens and holes, but I have no fixed habitation. Note, 1. That many persons take up rash and sudden resolutions to follow Christ, before they have well considered what it will cost them : what they are like to lose by being his disciples. 2. That such men may find themselves miserably mistaken, who expect to gain any thing by following Christ, but their soul's salvation. Note, 3. The title given to Christ ; he is stiled here, and frequently elsewhere, *The Son of man* : 1. To show the truth of his

humanity ; The Son of man must be Man. 2. To show the depth of his abasement ; Christ humbled, yea, emptied himself, when, being the Son of God, he submitted to be made Man : *The Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me : and let the dead bury their dead.

We must not suppose, by this prohibition, that Christ disallows or disapproves of any civil office from one person to another, much less of a child to a parent, either living or dying : but he lets us know, 1. That no office of love and service to man must be preferred before our duty to God, unto whom we owe our first obedience. 2. That lawful and decent offices become sinful when they hinder greater duties. 3. That such as are called to the work and employment of the ministry, must mind that alone, and leave inferior duties to inferior persons : as if our Saviour had said, Others will serve well enough to bury the dead ; but thou, that art a consecrated person, must do that unto which thou art consecrated and set apart. Under the law, the priests might not come near a dead corpse, nor meddle with the interment of their own parents ; unto which our Saviour probably alludes.

23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. 24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves : but he was asleep. 25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us : we perish. 26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith ? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea ; and there was a great calm. 27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him !

Observe here, 1. Christ and his disciples no sooner put forth to sea, but dangers attend, and difficulties do accompany them ; a tempest arose, and the ship was covered with waves. Learn thence, That the presence of Christ itself doth not exempt his disciples and followers from trouble and

danger : here is a great tempest about the disciples' ears, though Christ was in their company. Observe, 2. The posture our Saviour was in when this tempest arose ; he being weary on the land, was fallen asleep in the ship : our blessed Redeemer hereby showed himself to be truly and really Man ; as he took upon him our human nature, so he subjected himself to our human infirmities. Observe, 3. The disciples' application made to him : they awoke him with a sad outcry, *Lord, save us, we perish*. Here was faith mixed with human frailty : they had faith in his power, that he could save them ; but being asleep, they concluded he must awake before he could save them : whereas, though his human nature was asleep, yet his divine nature neither slumbered nor slept. Learn hence, That the prevalency of fear in a time of great and imminent danger, though it may argue weakness of faith, yet it is no evidence of want of faith : in the midst of the disciples' fears, they believed Christ's power. Observe, 4. A double rebuke given by our Saviour : 1. To the winds and seas ; next, to the fears of his disciples. He rebukes the winds and the seas, and instantly they are calm ; when the sea was as furious as a madman, Christ by his divine power calms it. Learn hence, That the most raging winds, and outrageous seas, cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ ; if once he rebukes them, their rage is down : God lays a law upon the most lawless creatures, even when they seem to act most lawlessly. 2. Christ rebukes his disciples' fears. *Why are ye fearful ?* No sooner was the storm up, but their fears were up ; and they were as much overset with their boisterous passions, as the vessel was with the tempestuous winds ; and accordingly Christ rebukes the tempest within, and then the tempest without ; first he calms their hearts, and then the seas. From this instance we see, that great faith in the habit may appear little in act and exercise : the disciples' faith in forsaking all and following Christ, was great faith ; but in this present act, their faith was weak through the prevalency of their fear. Note, lastly, That the disciples' faith was lessened by their fear ; fear is generated by unbelief, and unbelief strengthened by fear : as in things natural there is a circular generation, vapours beget showers, and showers vapours ; so it is in things moral, nothing can cure us of fear, till God cures us of unbelief ; Christ therefore takes an effectual

method to rid the disciples of their fears, by rebuking their unbelief.

28 And when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

We read of few, if any, in the Old Testament, that were possessed with evil spirits ; but of many in the New Testament. Our Saviour came into the world to destroy the works of the devil ; therefore he suffered Satan to enter some human bodies, to show his divine power in casting them out. Note here, 1. That the evil angels by their fall lost their purity, but not their power. 2. That they do no oftener exert their power in doing mischief to the bodies and lives of men, is from the restraining power of God. The devils cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God ? art thou come hither to torment us before the time ?

Observe, The devils knew Christ to be the Son of God, and that he came into the world to be a Saviour, but not their Saviour ; and therefore they cry out, *What have we to do with thee ?* or thou with us ? O what an uncomfortable faith is this, to believe that Christ is a Saviour, and at the same time to know that he is none of our Saviour ! But what is their outcry against Christ ? This, *Art thou come to torment us before the time ?* Learn, 1. That there are tortures appointed to the spiritual natures of evil angels. The fire of hell is conceived to be partly material, and partly spiritual ; partly material, to work upon the bodies of evil men, and partly spiritual, to work upon the souls of men, and the spirits of evil angels. Learn, 2. That though the devils be now as full of discontent as they can be, yet they are not so full of torment as they shall be ; their speech here intimates, that there will be a time when their torments shall be increased, when they shall have their fill of torment ; therefore they pray, Increase not our torments before the appointed time of their increase.

30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine

feeding. 31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

Observe here, 1. A notable evidence of Satan's limited power, that a whole legion of devils had not power to destroy one man, nor were able to hurt the meanest creature without permission. Observe, 2. The devils' acknowledgment of their own impotency, and Christ's power; their asking leave of Christ to go into the swine, shows that they could not go of themselves. Learn hence, 1. The restlessness of Satan's malice; he will hurt the swine rather than not hurt at all. 2. That though Satan's malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; as he cannot do all the mischief he would, so he shall not do all he can.

32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters:

Although Christ seldom wrought any destructive miracle, and although he certainly foresaw that the swine would perish in the waters; yet that the people might see how great the power and malice of the devil would be, if not restrained by Christ, he permitted him to enter into the swine; Christ *said unto them, Go*; and how glad was Satan of this permission to enter into the swine, in order to their destruction. Let it teach us our duty, by prayer, to commit ourselves, and all that we have, morning and evening, into the hands of God's care; all that we have in the house, and all that we have in the field, that it may be preserved from the power and malice of evil spirits.

33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. 34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

Observe, 1. What a contrary effect this miracle which Christ wrought had upon these people: instead of believing on him for his miraculous cure of the possessed, the

loss of their swine enragea them, and makes them desire Christ to depart from them. Temporal losses are so great in worldly men's estimation, that spiritual advantages are nothing esteemed; carnal hearts prefer their swine before their Saviour, and had rather lose Christ's presence than their worldly profits. Observe, 2. How unanimous and importunate these Gadarenes were to get rid of Christ; the whole city came out, and are not only willing to his departure, but they beseech him to depart out of their coasts. Learn hence, That deplorably sad is the condition of such from whom Christ departs; more deplorably sad their state who say unto Christ, Depart; but most deplorably sad is the case of them that entreat and beseech Christ to depart from them: thus did these Gadarenes, and accordingly Christ took ship and departed from them, and we never read of his return unto them.

#### CHAP. IX.

AND he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

In the last verse of the foregoing chapter, the Gadarenes with one consent desire Christ to depart out of their coasts; here we find our Saviour, according to their desire, departing from them into his own city, which was Capernaum: for Bethlehem brought him forth, Nazareth brought him up, and Capernaum was his dwelling-place. From their desire of Christ's departure, and from Christ's departing according to their desire, we learn, That the blessed Jesus will not long trouble that people with his presence, who are weary of his company, and desirous of his departure.

2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

Observe, 1. The patient, *One sick of the palsy*, which being a resolution of the nerves, weakens the joints, and confines the person to his bed or couch. As a demonstration of Christ's divine power, he was pleased to single out some incurable diseases (as the world accounts them) to work a cure upon, as the leprosy and palsy. 2. The Physician, Jesus Christ; he alone is that wise, faithful, and compassionate Physician, that can and doth cure both soul

and body. Observe, 3. The moving and impulsive cause of his cure, *Jesus seeing their faith*; that is, their firm persuasion that he was clothed with a divine power, and able to help; together with their confidence in his goodness, that he was as willing as he was able; and no sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, but Christ did exert his divine power in healing. It was not the sick man's faith but the faith of his friends: the faith of others may prevail for obtaining corporal benefits and temporal blessings for us: thus the centurion's faith healed his servant, and Jairus's faith raised his daughter. Observe, 4. The marvellous efficacy and power of faith: it obtained not only what was desired, but more than was expected: they desired only the healing of the body; but *Jesus seeing their faith, heals body and soul too*, saying, *Be of good cheer: thy sins are forgiven thee*; intimating, that diseases proceed from sin, because Christ first speaks of forgiving them; yet it is conceived that Christ rather speaketh here of the temporal remission of the punishment, than of the eternal; because that depends on our own faith, and not others'.

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

See here how the best of men are sometimes charged with saying and doing the worst of things; to do well and bear ill, was the portion of Christ himself, and may be the portion of the holiest of those that belong to Christ: the innocent Jesus was accused of blasphemy, of sorcery, and of the blackest crimes. Innocency itself can protect no man from slander and false accusations.

4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? 5 For whether is easier, to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, *Arise, and walk*? 6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) *Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house*.

Our Saviour here gives the Pharisees a two-fold demonstration of his godhead: First, by letting them understand that he knew their thoughts; for to search the hearts, and to know the thoughts, of the children of men, is not in the power either

of angels or men, but the prerogative of God only. Secondly, by assuming to himself a power to forgive sins;—the Son of man hath power to forgive sins. Our Saviour here, by forgiving sins in his own name, and by his own authority, doth give the world an undeniable proof and convincing evidence of his godhead: for, *Who can forgive sins, but God only?*

7 And he arose, and departed to his house. 8. But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Note here, The multitude marvelled, but not believed; they admire our Saviour for an extraordinary man, but did not believe in him as the Son of God: they praise God for giving such power to heal the bodies of men: but not for sending his Son into the world, to save the souls of men. Learn hence, That the sight of Christ's miracles is not sufficient to work faith in the soul, but requires the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit; the one may make us marvel, the other must make us believe.

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Observe here, the number of our Lord's apostles not being filled up, what a strange election and choice he makes; Matthew, a grinding publican, is the man. Learn, Such is the freeness of God's grace, that it chooses, and such is the efficacy of it, that it overpowers and brings in, the worst of sinners unto God: Matthew a publican, Zaccheus an extortioner, Manasseh a murderer, Paul a persecutor; all these are brought home to God by the power of converting grace. Observe, 2. Matthew's ready compliance with God's call, *He arose and followed Christ*. When the inward call of the Spirit accompanies the outward call of the word, the soul readily complies, and presently yields obedience to the voice of God. Christ oft-times speaks by his word to our ears, and we hear not, we stir not; but when he speaks by his Spirit to our hearts, Satan shall not hold us down, the world shall not keep us back, but we shall arise, and follow our Lord and Master *Bp. Hall*.

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Observe here, Christ invited Matthew to a discipleship, Matthew invites Christ to a feast; the servant invites his Master, a sinner invites his Saviour. We do not find, wherever Christ was invited to any table, that he refused to go; if a Pharisee, if a publican invited, he constantly went: not for the pleasure of eating, but for the opportunity of conversing and doing good: Christ feasts us, when we feast him. From Matthew's example, learn, That new converts are full of affection towards Christ, and very expressive of their love unto him. Such as before conversion disesteemed him, do afterwards kindly and respectfully entertain him: Matthew, touched with a sense of Christ's rich love, makes him a royal feast. Observe farther, How at this feast many publicans and sinners were present, of Matthew's acquaintance no doubt, and probably invited by him, that they might also see Christ, and be partakers of the same grace with him. Whence we learn, That grace teaches a man to desire and seek the conversion of others; and such as are truly brought home to Christ themselves, will study and endeavour to bring in all their acquaintance to Christ also.

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

See here, what a grief it is to wicked men to find others brought in to Christ; the wicked Pharisees murmur, repine, and envy, instead of admiring Christ's condescension, and adoring his divine goodness: they censure him for conversing with sinners; but Christ tells them in the following verses, that he conversed with them as their Physician, not as their Companion.

12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. 13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

As if our Lord had said, "With whom should the physician converse, but with his sick patients? Now I am come into the

world to do the office of a kind physician unto men; surely then I am to take all opportunities to help and heal them: they that are sick need the physician; but for you Pharisees, who are whole and well in your own opinion, and swelled with a conceit of your own righteousness, I have no hopes of doing any good upon you; for such as think themselves whole, desire no physician's help." Learn hence, 1. That sin is the soul's malady, its spiritual disease and sickness. 2. That Christ is the Physician appointed by God, for the cure and healing of this disease and malady. 3. That there are multitudes spiritually sick, who yet think themselves sound and whole. 3. That only such as are sensible of their spiritual sickness, are subjects capable of cure, and the persons whom Christ is a healing Physician to: *They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. 16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. 17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

The Pharisees themselves had a contention with our Saviour in the foregoing verses; here they set on the disciples of John, to contend with him about fasting, alleging that the disciples of John fasted often, Christ's disciples not at all. Our Saviour owns it, that his disciples did not fast at present, for two reasons. 1. Because it was unsuitable to them. 2. Because it was intolerable for them. It was unsuitable to them, because of Christ's bodily presence with them; this made it a time of joy and feasting, not of mourning and fasting: whilst Christ the Bridegroom is with them, they must feast and rejoice; when removed from them, there will be cause enough to

fast and mourn. Christ is the bridegroom and his church the bride, which he has espoused and married to himself; and whilst his spouse did enjoy his bodily presence with her, it was a day of joy and rejoicing to her, and mourning and fasting was improper for her. Again, this discipline of fasting was at present intolerable for the disciples; for they were raw, green, and tender, and could no more bear the severities of religion at present, than an old garment could bear a piece of new stiff cloth to be set into it, which will make the rent worse, if the garment comes to a stretch; nor no more than old bottles can keep new wine. Thus, says Christ, my disciples are young and green, tender and weak, newly converted, they cannot bear the severer exercises of religion presently; but when I am ascended into heaven, I will send down my Holy Spirit, which shall enable them to do all the duties which the gospel enjoins. Hence we may gather, That young converts, till grown up to some consistency in grace, must not be put upon the severer exercises of religion; but handled with that tenderness and gentleness which becomes the mild and merciful dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour here commends prudence to his ministers; that they put not their people upon duties beyond their strength, but consult their progress in christianity, and the proficiency they have made in religion, and treat them accordingly.

18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. 19 And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did his disciples.

Observe the humble posture in which this man came unto Christ, namely, falling at his foot and worshipping him; which was not only a sign of tender affection towards his daughter, but an evidence of his faith in our blessed Saviour; yet his confining Christ's power to his bodily presence and to the touch of his hand, was a token of the weakness of his faith: *Come*, says he, *and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live.* As if Christ could not have cured her, without either coming to her, or laying his hand upon her. Note here, That although all that come to Christ are not alike strong in faith, yet our blessed Redeemer refuses none that come unto him with a sincere

faith, though in much weakness of faith. *Jesus arose, and followed him.*

20 (And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: 21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. 22 But Jesus turned him about; and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith had made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.)

While Christ is on his way to the ruler's house, a diseased woman comes behind him, touches his garment, and is instantly healed; the virtue lay, not in her finger, but in her faith; or rather in Christ, which her faith instrumentally drew forth. Observe here, How faith oft-times meets with a sweeter welcome than it could expect. This poor woman came to Christ trembling, but went away triumphing; Christ bids her *be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.*

23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, 24 He said unto them, Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. 25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. 26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

Our Saviour being come to the ruler's house, finds the people very busy preparing for the interment of the dead corpse, with music and other solemnities. This custom of having music at funerals came from the heathens; no mention is made thereof in the Old Testament: we read of tearing the flesh, shaving the head, eating the bread of mourners, also of funeral songs, but these were only sung with the voice; but instruments of music at funerals came from the Pagans. Weeping and lamentation are the most proper funeral music; then nothing sounds so well as a sigh, nor is any thing so much in season as a tear: yet are all demonstrations of immoderate and excessive mourning both hurtful to the living and dishonourable to the dead; nor is it an



argument of more love, but an evidence of less grace. Observe next, In what sense our Saviour affirms, that *the damsel was not dead*. *Mortua est vobis, mihi dormit*, says St. Jerome; *She is dead to you, but asleep to me*: I can as easily raise her from death, as you can awake her out of sleep. Her soul was separated from her body, but not yet fixed in its eternal mansion. Souls departed are under the conduct of angels, good or bad, to their several places of bliss or misery. Probably the soul of this damsel was under the guard of angels near her dead body, waiting the pleasure of Christ in reference to it; either to restore it again to the body, or to translate it to its eternal mansion. Note here, That from these words of our Saviour, *the maid is not dead, but sleepeth*, the Jesuits plead for their doctrine of equivocations and mental reservations, alleging, that when Christ said, *she is not dead*, he reserved in his mind, *in respect of my power*. But the words of Christ were plainly spoken to those who were preparing for her interment and funeral rites, and accordingly only intimate, that she was not so dead as that they needed to make these preparations, he being come to awake her as out of sleep.

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou son of David, have mercy on us*. 28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. 29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. 30 And their eyes were opened: and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. 31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

The ruler, and others who came to Christ for cure and healing, believed him to be a man unto whom Almighty God had communicated divine power. But it is observable, that these poor blind men did believe him to be the Messiah, by their calling him the Son of David; and according to their faith, so was their success: their faith capacitated them for a cure. But why did our Lord enjoin the blind men silence, and

straitly charge them to tell no man of the cure? Herein the great modesty and humility of Christ appeared, in avoiding all ostentation and commendation; as also a due care of his own safety, lest the publishing of his miracles should create him untimely danger from the Pharisees.

32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. 33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

Still our Lord goes about doing good; before, he healed the diseased, here he helps the possessed. Learn, 1. That amongst the many calamities which sin has rendered human nature liable and obnoxious to, this is one, to be bodily possessed by Satan. This man's dumbness was caused by the devil's possession. Learn, 2. That one demonstration of Christ's divine power, and a convincing evidence of his being truly and really God, was, his casting out devils by the word of his power.

34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

See here the dreadful and sad effects of blindness, obstinacy and malice; the Pharisees charge Christ with making a contract with the devil, affirming that he derived his power from him; but how unlikely was this, that Satan should lend our Saviour a power against himself, and for the destruction of his own kingdom? O how dangerous is a wilful and obstinate opposition of the truth! It provokes God to deliver a person up to final obduracy.

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's great work and business in this world; it was doing good both to the bodies and souls of men; the most pleasant and delightful, the most happy and glorious work that a per-

son can be employed about. 2. His unwearied diligence and industry, in this great and good work; *He went about all the cities and villages, preaching the gospel, and healing diseases*: he travelled from place to place, to seek occasions, and to lay hold upon all opportunities, of being useful and beneficial to mankind. Observe, 3. The particular instance of our Lord's goodness and compassion towards the people in those cities and villages where he travelled: they wanted the preaching of the gospel, that is, faithful dispensers of it. For though they had the scribes and Pharisees to teach them, they instructed them rather in their own traditions than in the simplicity of the gospel; Christ pities the people as sheep without a shepherd. Thence learn, That idle and lazy, unskilful and unfaithful, labourers in Christ's harvest, are no labourers in his account. They were *as sheep having no shepherd*. He who doth not instruct his flock, and feed them with the sincere milk of the word, from a heart full of love to God and of compassion to souls, deserves not the name of a true shepherd. *Dr. Whitby.*

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

As if Christ had said, "There is a great number of people that are willing and prepared to receive instructions, but there are but few who are able to instruct these poor people in the ways of righteousness and truth; therefore pray and plead with God, that he would provide skilful and faithful ministers to be sent out to preach the gospel throughout the world." Note here, 1. That God's church is an harvest-field. 2. That the ministers of God are labourers in his harvest, under God, the Lord of the harvest. 3. That to God alone doth it belong to send forth labourers into his harvest; and none must thrust themselves in, till God sends them forth. 4. That the number of faithful labourers in God's harvest is comparatively small and few. 5. That it is the church's duty to pray, and that earnestly and incessantly, to the Lord of the harvest, to increase the number of faithful labourers, and also to increase their faithfulness.

#### CHAP. X.

This chapter acquaints us with the first commission which our Saviour gave his disciples to preach the gospel: he directs them, First, Whither to go, and to whom to preach; namely, to the Jews, whom

he calls *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. He instructs them, Secondly, As to the doctrine he would have them preach; namely, the doctrine of repentance. And, lastly, he arms them against all the difficulties they might meet with in their ministry; and particularly fortifies them against the fears of poverty and persecution.

AND when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

As the Jewish church arose from twelve patriarchs, so did the christian church become planted by twelve apostles; the person commissioning them, was Christ. None are to undertake the work and calling of the ministry, but those whom Christ appoints; and the persons commissioned were disciples before they were apostles. To teach us, that Christ will have such as preach the gospel to be disciples before they are ministers; trained up in the doctrine of the gospel, before they undertake a public charge. Note farther, The power here delegated by Christ to his apostles, over unclean spirits, and for healing diseases, in his name. And after Christ's resurrection, they were enabled to confer this miraculous power upon others, by laying their hands upon them; an eminent demonstration of the truth of the christian faith. Learn hence, That to the intent the apostles might preach the gospel with more authority and greater efficacy, Christ gave them a power of working miracles; namely, to cast out devils, and heal all manner of diseases, in his name. *When he had called together his disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits.*

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother: James *the son of Zebedee*, and John his brother; 3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son of Alphaeus*; and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus; 4 Simon the Canaanite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Observe here, Of the twelve apostles Peter is named first, and Judas last. Peter is named first, because first called, *Matt. iv. 18.* or because probably elder than the rest; or because, for order-sake, he might speak before the rest: from whence may be in-

ferred a primacy, but no supremacy; a priority of order, but no superiority of degree. As the foreman of a grand inquest has a precedency, but no pre-eminency. Judas is named last, with a brand of infamy set upon him, that he was the traitor, the person that betrayed his Lord and Master. Learn hence, That though the truth of grace be absolutely necessary to a minister's salvation, yet the want of it doth not disannul his office, nor hinder the lawfulness of his ministry: Judas, though a traitor, was yet a lawful minister. Inward holiness is not necessary to render the offices belonging to the ministerial function valid and effectual: Judas preaches Christ as well as the rest, and was not excepted when Christ said, *He that receiveth you, receiveth me.*

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This was only a temporary prohibition, whilst Christ was here upon earth, the Jews being Christ's own people, of whom he came, and to whom he was promised; the gospel is first preached to them; but afterwards the apostles had a command to teach all nations; and after Christ's ascension, Samaria received the gospel by the preaching of Philip. From the character which Christ gives of the Jews, calling them *lost sheep*, we learn, 1. That the condition of a people, before brought home to Christ by the ministers of the gospel, is a lost condition; sinners are as lost sheep, wandering and going astray from God, till the ministry of the word finds them. 2. That the great work and office of the ministers of the gospel is to call home, and to bring in, lost sheep unto Jesus Christ the great Shepherd. *Go*, says he, *to the lost sheep, &c.* Mark, Christ calls the Israelites sheep, though they were not obedient to the voice of their Shepherd, because they were God's chosen people; and he calls them the lost sheep, because they were both lost in themselves, and also in great danger of being eventually and finally lost, by the ignorance and wickedness of their spiritual guides.

7 And, as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Observe here, 1. The duty enjoined the apostles in order to the bringing home of lost souls to Christ, and that is, preaching;

*As ye go, preach.* Note thence, That the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, is the special mean appointed by Christ for the salvation of lost sinners. Observe, 2. The doctrine they are enjoined to preach, namely, that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; that is, that the promised Messiah was come, and had set up his kingdom in the world, and expected their obedience to his laws. Where note, How that the preaching of John, of Christ, and his apostles, was one and the same; namely, the doctrine of repentance: *repent, say they all, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; that is, the time of the Messiah's appearing, which has been so long expected, is now come.

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Here our Saviour empowers his apostles to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine; but gives them a charge to work them freely, without making any private advantage to themselves. Where observe, 1. How beneficial the miracles were (which Christ and his apostles wrought) to mankind. Moses' miracles were as great judgments as wonders; but these were beneficent, they delivered men from miseries, from bodily diseases, from the power and malice of evil spirits; they healed the sick, and cast out devils. Observe, 2. That Jesus Christ, to show himself a free Saviour, and that whatever came from him was the effect of free grace, gave his apostles a charge to dispense their power in working miracles freely, without money, and without price.

9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses: 10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

This command of Christ was temporary, and extended only to the apostles' first journey, which they were soon to despatch: our Saviour encourages them to trust to God; first for protection; take no staves with you, that is, no striking or smiting staves for your own defence. Preachers must be no strikers, though a walking-staff they might take with them: itinerant preachers might be wearied with travelling, as well as with speaking. Next for provision; he would not have them over-solici-

ious for that neither ; saying, *the workman is worthy of his meat*. As it is a minister's great duty to trust God for his maintenance ; so it is the people's duty to take care for the minister's comfortable subsistence. *The labourer is worthy of his hire, and the workman is worthy of his meat*.

11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy ; and there abide till ye go thence. 12 And when ye come into an house, salute it. 13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it : but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. 15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

Our Saviour proceeds to direct his disciples how to manage this their first journey in preaching the gospel : he enjoins them, 1. To observe the rules of decency in their going from one place to another ; not like beggars wandering from house to house, but having entered a city, or village, to make inquiry who stood best affected to the gospel, and there turn in. 2. Our Saviour enjoins them civil and religious courtesy towards those whom they applied themselves unto. *When ye come into a house, salute it* ; give it a civil salutation, but especially a christian and spiritual salute, wishing them mercy, grace, and peace. 3. He encourages his apostles in the want of success ; if they hear you not, *shake off the dust of your feet*. This action was emblematical, and signified, That Almighty God would in like manner shake off them, and esteem them no better than the vilest dust. Note, That those who despise the message which the ministers of the gospel bring, shall hereafter find the dust of their feet, and the ashes of their graves, to give a judicial testimony against them in the day of Christ. Wherever the word is preached, 'tis for a testimony against them ; for if the dust of a minister's feet bear witness against the despisers of the gospel, their sermons much more. Here Grotius well notes, that the sin of those who reject the gospel must be

a wilful sin, which it was in their power to avoid ; because it rendered them obnoxious to greater punishment than Sodom and Gomorrah were to suffer at the day of judgment ; and because committed against greater light, and greater confirmation of the truth : doubtless the higher a people rise under the means of grace, the lower they fall if they miscarry.

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves : be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Our Saviour, in this and the following verses, arms his apostles against all the difficulties, dangers, and discouragements, which they might meet with in the course of their ministry : he tells them, he sent them forth as sheep amongst wolves ; intimating thereby unto them, that the enemies of the gospel have as great an inclination, from their malicious nature, to devour and destroy the ministers of Christ, as wolves have from their natural temper to devour sheep : he therefore recommends to them prudence and innocence ; *be ye wise as serpents*, to avoid the world's injuries, and *harmless as doves*, in not revenging them. The ministers of Christ must not be altogether doves, lest they fall into dangers ; nor altogether serpents, lest they endanger others. For as piety without policy is too simple to be safe, so policy without piety is too subtle to be good. Our Saviour in this text teaches us that wisdom and innocency should dwell together. Offend none by word or example.

17 But beware of men : for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues ; 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak ; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Here our Saviour lets his apostles know, that for their owning him, and preaching his gospel, they should be brought before all sorts of magistrates, and in all kinds of courts : but he advises them, when they are brought before kings and princes, not to be

anxiously thoughtful what they should say; for it should be given them in that hour, what they should answer. Learn hence, That though truth may be opposed, yet truth's defenders should never be ashamed; and rather than they shall want a tongue to plead for it, God himself will prompt them by his Spirit, and suggest such truths to their minds as all their opposers should not be able to gainsay. Yet, note, That Christ doth not here forbid all fore-thoughts what to say, but only distrustful thoughts; that they should not, like orators or advocates, strive to make studied pleas or rhetorical apologies for themselves, since the Spirit would be in their mouths, and give them immediate supplies. Note also, That because Christ here promised his apostles an immediate assistance from the Holy Spirit, how vain the Anabaptists and Quakers are, who by virtue of this promise do now expect the same assistance in prayer and preaching: but they may as well pretend to cast out devils as the apostles did, by virtue of the same assistance which the apostles had; whereas these extraordinary gifts have long ceased.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Our Saviour goes on in a farther discovery of the world's hatred and enmity against the gospel, and the preachers of it; and gives all christians in general, and his ministers in particular, to understand, that such is the enmity of the world against holiness, and the professors of it, that it will overcome and extinguish even the natural affections of the nearest and dearest relations towards each other. Grace teaches us to *lay down our lives for the brethren*, but corruption teaches a brother to take away the life of a brother; *The brother shall deliver the brother to death*. Yet observe, Our Saviour comforts his disciples that there will be an end of these sufferings; and assures them, that if their faith and patience did hold out unto the end, they should be saved. This is our comfort, that if our sufferings for Christ end not in our life-time, they will end with our lives.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.

Our Saviour here directs his apostles to a prudent care for their own preservation, and allows them to flee in time of persecution; assuring them, that before they had gone through all the cities of the Jews, preaching the gospel, he would certainly come in judgment against Jerusalem, and with severity destroy his own murderers and their persecutors. Learn, That Christ allows his ministers the liberty of flight in time of persecution, that they may preserve their lives for future service. Surely it is no shame to fly, when our Captain commands it, and also practises it, *Matt. ii*. Christ by his own example has sanctified that state of life unto us, and by his command made it lawful for us.

24 The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. 25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

Our Saviour here teaches all christians, but especially ministers, how unreasonable and absurd it is for them to expect kinder usage from an unkind world than he himself met with. Are we greater, holier, or wiser than he? Why then should we expect better usage than he? Was he hated, persecuted, reviled, murdered, for the holiness of his doctrine and the usefulness of his life? Why then should any of us *think strange of the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had befallen them*? 1 Pet. iv 12. Is it not enough that the disciple be *as his master, and the servant as his lord*, but must he hope to be above him?

26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27 What I tell you in darkness, *that speak ye in light*: and what ye hear in the ear, *that preach ye upon the house-tops*.

Christ here exhorts his disciples to a free profession and open publication of the doctrine of the gospel, from this consideration,

that whatever they say or do shall be brought to light, proclaimed and published to the world. I will make the excellency of your doctrine and the innocency of your lives shine as the light; your integrity in dispensing of it, and patience in suffering for it, shall redound to God's glory and your commendation, at the revelation of your Lord from heaven. As wicked men have cause to fear because their evil deeds shall be made evident, so good men have cause to rejoice because their goodness and good deeds shall be made manifest. Let it be our care to do good, and it shall be Christ's care to discover the goodness which we do, to vindicate it from misconception, and set it in its clearest light.

28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Observe here the following particulars, 1. An unwarrantable fear condemned; and that is, the sinful, servile, slavish fear of impotent man: *Fear not him that can kill the body.* 2. An holy, awful, and prudential fear of the omnipotent God commended: *Fear him that is able to kill both body and soul.* 3. The persons that this duty of fear is recommended to and bound upon—Christ's own disciples, yea, his ministers and ambassadors; they both may and ought to fear him; not only for his greatness and goodness, but upon the account of his punitive justice; as being able to cast both soul and body into hell, such a fear is not only lawful, but laudable, not only commendable, but commanded, and well becomes the servants of God themselves. This text contains a certain evidence that the soul doth not perish with the body; none are able to kill the soul, but it continues after death in a state of sensibility; it is granted that men can kill the body, but it is denied that they can kill the soul: it is spoken of temporal death; consequently then the soul doth not perish with the body, nor is the soul reduced into an insensible state by the death of the body; nor can the soul be supposed to sleep as the body doth till the resurrection; for an intelligible, thinking, and perceiving being, as the soul is, cannot be deprived of sensation, thought, and perception, any more than it can lose its being: the soul, after the death of the body, being capable of bliss or misery, must continue in a state of sensation.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Observe here, 1. The doctrine which our Saviour preaches to his disciples: and that is the doctrine of divine providence; which concerns itself for the meanest creatures: even the birds of the air, and the hairs of our head, do fall within the compass of God's protecting care. 2. Here is the use which our Saviour makes of this doctrine; namely, to fortify the spirits of his disciples against all distrustful fears and distracting cares. Learn, That the consideration of the divine care and gracious providence of God over us and ours, ought to antidote our spirits against all distrustful fears whatsoever. If an hair from the head falls not to the ground without a providence, much less shall the head itself; if the very excrements of the body, (such are the hairs,) be taken care of by God, surely the more noble parts of the body, and especially the noblest part of ourselves, our souls, shall fall under his particular regard.

32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Observe here, 1. That not to confess Christ, in his account, is to deny him: and to deny him, is to be ashamed of him. 2. That whosoever shall deny, disown, or be ashamed of Christ, either in his person, in his gospel, or in his members, for any fear or favour of man, shall with shame be disowned; and eternally rejected by him at the dreadful judgment of the great day. Christ may be denied three ways; doctrinally, by an erroneous and heretical judgment; verbally, by oral expressions; vitally, by a wicked and unholy life. But woe to that soul that denies Christ any of these ways!

34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-

in-law against her mother-in-law.  
**36** And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household.

We must distinguish here betwixt the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental event of it. His intentional aim was to propagate and promote peace in the world; but through the corruption of man's nature, the accidental event of his coming is war and division: not that these are the genuine and natural fruits of the gospel, but occasional and accidental only. Note, That the preaching of the gospel, and setting up the kingdom of Christ in the world, though it be not the natural cause, yet it is the accidental occasion, of much of that war and tumult, of much of that distraction and confusion, which the world abounds with.

**37** He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

**38** And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. **39** He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Note here, That by *worthiness* we are not to understand the meritoriousness of the action, but the qualification of the person. He that cometh to Christ, (that is, will be his disciple,) must, by a deliberate act of the understanding, and well-advised choice of the will, prefer him before all the world, and his dearest relations whatsoever; not that our Saviour by these expressions doth condemn natural love and affection, either to our relations or our own lives, but only regulates and directs it; and shows that our first and chief love must be bestowed upon himself. We may have tender and relenting affections towards our dear relations; but then the consideration of Christ's truth and religion must take place of these; yea, of life itself; nay, when these come in competition, we are to regard them no more than if they were the objects of our hatred. *Luke xiv. 26. If any man hate not his father, &c.* Learn hence, That all the disciples of Christ should be ready and willing, whenever God calls them to it, to quit all their temporal interests and enjoyments, even life itself, and to submit to any temporal inconvenience, even death itself; and all this willingly, cheerfully, and patiently, rather than disown their relation to Christ, and quit the profession of his truth and re-

ligion. **2.** That such as for secular interest, and the preservation of temporal life, do renounce their profession of Christ and his religion, they do not only greatly hazard their temporal life, but expose their eternal life to the greatest danger. *He that findeth his life shall lose it, &c.*

**40** He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. **41** He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. **42** And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward.

Here in the close of the chapter, our blessed Saviour encourages his apostles to faithfulness in their office, by assuring them that he should reckon and esteem all the kindness shown to them as done unto himself: and to encourage the world to be kind to his disciples and ministers, he assures them that even a cup of cold water should meet with a liberal reward. How cold is their charity who deny a cup of cold water to the ministers and disciples of Christ! Learn, **1.** That there is some special and eminent reward due to the faithful prophets of God above other men. **2.** That he that shall entertain a prophet, and do any good office for him, under that name, that is, for his office sake, shall be partaker of that reward. **3.** That the least office of love and respect, of kindness and charity, which we show to any of the ministers or members of Jesus Christ for his sake, Christ accounts it as done unto himself, and it shall be rewarded by himself.

#### CHAP. XI.

**AND** it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence, to teach and to preach in their cities.

Our blessed Saviour having sent forth his twelve apostles in the foregoing chapter, to plant and propagate the gospel, we find him in this chapter following them himself in that great and necessary work: *he departed to teach and to preach in their cities.* Christ,

the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls, sent not forth the apostles as his curates, to labour and sweat in the vineyard, whilst he took his ease at home; but he followed them himself; his word of command to them was, *Præite, sequar; Go ye before, I will follow after.* Note, 1. That preaching of the gospel is a great and necessary work, incumbent upon all the ministers of Christ, let their dignity and pre-eminency in the church be what it will. None of the servants are above their Lord. 2. That if there be a distinction betwixt teaching and preaching, (as some apprehend,) they are both the work of Christ's ministers, who are obliged from their Master's example to perform both: teaching is in order to the conversion of sinners, and preaching in order to the edification of saints.

2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, 3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

It was not for John's information that he sent his disciples to Jesus, but for their satisfaction, that he was the true and promised Messiah; John was assured of it himself by a sign from heaven at our Saviour's baptism, chap. iii. 17. But John's disciples, out of great zeal to him their master, envied Christ himself, and were unwilling to believe any person greater than their master: therefore John, out of a pious design to confirm his disciples in their belief of Jesus being the true Messiah, sends them to our Saviour to hear the doctrine which he taught, and to see the miracles which he wrought. Learn hence, What a pious desire there is in such as know Christ experimentally themselves, to bring all that belong to them to a saving acquaintance with him. *Archbp. Tillotson, Vol. V.*

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Observe here, 1. The way and means which our Saviour takes for the conviction and satisfaction of John's disciples, that he was the true Messiah: he appeals to the mi-

racles wrought by himself, and submits the miracles wrought by him to the judgment of their sense; *Go and show John the miracles which you hear and see.* Observe, 2. The miracles themselves; *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, &c.* Christ was all this in a literal sense, and in a mystical sense also; he was an eye of understanding to the ignorant, a foot of power to the weak; he opened an ear in deaf hearts to receive the word of life; and the poor are evangelized, that is, turned into the spirit and temper of the gospel; the rich hear the gospel, but the poor receive it, that is, they feel the powerful impressions of it; as we say, such a one is Italianized, when his carriage is such as if he were a natural Italian. The passive verb *Ευαγγελίζονται* denotes, *non actum predicationis, sed affectum coangelii predicati*; the good effect which the gospel had upon the hearts and lives of the poor, transforming them into the likeness of itself. Learn, It is a blessed thing, when the preaching of the gospel has such a powerful influence upon the minds of men, that the temper of their minds and the actions of their lives are a lively transcript of the spirit and temper of the holy Jesus. Note, That as it was prophesied of the Messias, that he should preach the gospel to the poor, *Isa. lxi. 1.* accordingly they were the poor with whom Christ preached unto; for the Pharisees and rabbies neglected them as the people of the earth, *John vii. 49.* And Grotius says that they had a proverb, That the Spirit of God never rests but upon a rich man. Besides, the Pharisees' and rabbies' doctrines, which they preached, were vain traditions, allegorical interpretations, and cabalistical deductions, which transcended the capacities of the vulgar, so that they could profit very little by repairing to their schools and by hearing their interpretations of the law; and therefore our Saviour, in the close of this chapter, calls the people off from them to learn of him, ver. 28. *Come unto me, &c.*

6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Our Saviour here, by pronouncing them blessed that are not offended in him, doth intimate the misery of those who stumble at him, and to whom he is the Rock of offence. Some are offended at the poverty of his person, others are offended at the sublimity and sanctity of his doctrine. Some are offended at his cross, others are offended at



his free grace; but such as, instead of being offended at Christ, believe in him, and bottom their expectations of heaven and salvation upon him, are in a happy and blessed condition: *blessed is he that shall not be offended in me.*

7 And, as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken with the wind? 8 But what went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. 6 But what went ye out for to see? a prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. 10 For this is *he* of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Our Saviour having given satisfaction to John's disciples, next enters upon a large commendation of John himself. Where observe, 1. The persons whom he commended him before; not John's own disciples, for they had too high an opinion of their master already, and were so much addicted to John that they envied Christ for his sake; see *John* iii. 26. *Behold, Christ baptizeth, and all men come unto him.* It was a great eye-sore that Christ had more hearers and followers than John; therefore not before John's disciples but before the multitude, Christ commends John; for as John's disciples had too high, so the multitude had too low, an opinion of him; possibly because of his imprisonment and sufferings. There was a time when the people had high thoughts of John, but now they undervalued him. Learn thence, The great uncertainty of popular applause: the people condemn to-day whom they admired yesterday; he who to day is cried up, to-morrow is trodden down. The word and the ministers are the same; but this proceeds from the fickleness and inconstancy of the people: nothing is so mutable as the mind of man, nothing so variable as the opinion of the multitude. Observe, 2. The time when our Saviour thus commended John; not in the time of his prosperity and greatness, when the people flocked after him, and Herod got him to court and revered him; but when the giddy multitude had forsaken him, and he was fallen into disgrace at court, and

had preached himself into prison: now Christ vindicates his innocency, maintains his honour, proclaims his worth, and tells the people that the world was not worthy of such a preacher as John was. Learn thence, That Christ will stand by, and stick fast to, his faithful ministers, when all the world forsake them. Let the world slight and despise them at their pleasure, yet Christ will maintain their honour, and support their cause; as they bear a faithful witness to Christ, so Christ will bear witness to their faithfulness for him. Observe, 2. The commendation itself. Our Saviour commends John, 1. For his constancy: he was not a *reed shaken with the wind*; that is, a man of an unstable and unsettled judgment, but fixed and steadfast. 2. For his sobriety and high measure of mortification: he was no delicate, voluptuous person, but grave, sober, and severe; he was mortified to the glory and honour, to the ease and pleasures, of the world. John wrought no miracles; but his holy conversation was as effectual as miracles to prevail with the people. 3. For his humility: he might have been what he would: the people were ready to cry him up for the Messiah, the Christ of God: but John's lowly spirit refuses all; *he confessed, and denied not, saying, I am not the Christ*, but a poor minister of his, willing, but not worthy, to do him service. This will commend our ministry to the consciences of our people, when we seek not our own glory, but the glory of Christ. 4. Our Saviour commends John for his clear preaching and revealing of Christ to the people: *he was more than a prophet*, ver. 9. because he pointed out Christ more clearly and fully than any before him. The ancient prophets saw Christ afar off; John beheld him face to face: they prophesied of him; he pointed at him, saying, *This is he*. Whence learn, That the clearer any ministry is in discovering of Christ, the more excellent it is.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Our Saviour having highly commended John in the foregoing verses, here he sets bounds to the honours of his ministry, adding, That though John was greater than all the prophets that went before him, seeing more of Christ than all of them, yet

he saw less than them that came after him. The meanest evangelical minister that preaches Christ *come*, is to be preferred before all the old prophets, who prophesied of Christ *to come*. That minister who sets forth the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, is greater in the kingdom of heaven, that is, has an higher office in the church, and a more excellent ministry, than all the prophets, yea, than John himself. The excellency of a ministry consists in the light and clearness of it. Now though John's light did exceed all that went before him, yet it fell short of them that came after him : and thus he that was least in the kingdom of grace on earth, much more he that is least in the kingdom of glory in heaven, was greater than John. Not that the meanest christian, but the meanest evangelical prophet, or preacher of the christian doctrine, is greater than John ; partly in respect of his doctrine, which is more spiritual and heavenly ; partly in respect of his office, which was to preach Christ crucified and risen again ; and partly in respect of divine assistance, for John did no miracle, but the apostles that succeeded him *went forth, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*. Add to this, that the Holy Ghost fell not upon John, and he spake not by any extraordinary inspiration of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, as the apostles did ; and thus he that was least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

Our Saviour goes on in commending John's ministry from the great success of it : it had that powerful influence upon the consciences of men, that no soldiers were ever more violent and eager in the storming and taking a strong hold, than John's hearers were in pursuing the kingdom of heaven. Never any minister (before) discovered the Messiah and his kingdom so clearly as John did ; and therefore never was there such zeal to press into the kingdom of heaven amongst any, as the hearers of John had. Learn hence, 1. That the clearer knowledge any people have of the worth and excellency of heaven, the more will their zeal be inflamed in the pursuit of heaven. 2. That all that do intend and resolve for heaven must offer violence in the taking of

it ; none but the violent are victorious ; *they take it by force*. Which words are both restrictive and promissive. They are the violent and none other, that take it ; and all the violent shall take it. Though careless endeavours may prove abortive, vigorous prosecution shall not miscarry. There is also another exposition of these words ; *the violent take the kingdom of heaven by force* ; that is, the publicans and sinners, and poorer sort of people, who were well looked upon by the scribes and Pharisees as persons who had no right to the blessings of the Messiah ; these, as violent invaders and bold intruders, embrace the gospel, and do as it were take it by force from the learned rabbies, who challenge the chiefest place in this kingdom : and accordingly our Saviour tells them, *St. Matt. xxi. 31*. The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you ; for you believed not John's coming to you in the way of righteousness, but the publicans and harlots believed him, when at the same time the Pharisees and lawyers rejected, &c. being not baptized of him.

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come. 15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Here is still a farther commendation of John. The law and the prophets till the coming of John did foretell the Messiah, but not so determinately, not so nearly, not so clearly, as John did : and accordingly, he was that Elias which Isaias and Malachi foretold should be the harbinger and forerunner of Christ. But why hath John the Baptist the name of *Elias* ? Possibly because they were alike zealous in the work of God ; they were alike successful in that work ; and they were alike persecuted for their work ; the one by Jezebel, the other by Herodias.

16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation ? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, 17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced ; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking ; and they say, He hath a devil. 19 The Son of man came eating and drinking ;

and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But Wisdom is justified of her children.

Our Saviour in these words describes the perverse humour of the Pharisees, whom nothing could allure to the embracing of the gospel; neither John's ministry, nor Christ's. This our Saviour sets forth two ways. 1. Allegorically, ver. 16, 17. 2. Properly, ver. 18, 19. By way of allegory, he compares them to sullen children, whom nothing would please, neither mirth nor mourning: if their fellows piped before them, they would not dance; if they sung mournful songs to them, they would not lament: that is, the Pharisees were of such a censorious and capricious humour, that God himself could not please them, though he used variety of means and methods in order to that end. Neither the delightful arts of mercy, nor the doleful ditties of judgment, could affect or move their hearts. Next our Lord plainly interprets this allegory, by telling them, That *John came to them neither eating nor drinking*; that is, not so freely and plentifully as other men, being a very austere and mortified man, both in his diet and in his habit: and all this was designed by God, that the austerity of his life and severity of his doctrine might awaken the Pharisees to repentance: but instead of this, they censure him for having a devil: because he delighted in solitude, and avoided converse with men; according to the ancient proverb, that every solitary person is either an angel or a devil, either a wild beast or a god. John being thus rejected, Christ himself comes to them, who being of a free and familiar converse, not shunning the society of the worst of men, even of the Pharisees themselves, but complying with their customs, and companying with them at their feasts, yet without the least compliance with them in their sins: but the freedom of our Saviour's conversation displeased them as much as John's reservedness of temper; for they cry, *Behold a man gluttonous*. Christ's affability towards sinners, they call approbation of their sins; and his sociable disposition, looseness and luxury. Learn hence, 1. That the faithful and zealous ministers of God, let their temper and converse be what it will, cannot please the enemies of religion, and the haters of the power of godliness; neither John's austerity, nor

Christ's familiarity, would gain upon the Pharisees. It is our duty in the course of our ministry to seek to please all men for their good; but after all our endeavours to please all, we shall please but very few; but if God and conscience be of the number of those few, we are safe and happy. Observe, 2. That it has been the old policy of the devil, that he might hinder the success of the gospel, to fill the minds of persons with an invincible prejudice against the ministers and dispensers of the gospel. Observe, 3. That after all the scandalous reproaches cast upon religion, and the ministers of it, such as are Wisdom's children, wise and good men, will justify religion; that is, approve it in their judgments, honour it in their discourses, and adorn it in their lives: *Wisdom is justified of her children*.

20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: 21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

Our Saviour having gone through the cities of Galilee, preaching the doctrine of repentance, and confirming his doctrine with miracles, and finding multitudes after all his endeavours remain in their impenitence, he proceeds to upbraid them severely for that their contempt of gospel grace: *Then began he to upbraid the cities, &c.* Where observe, 1. The cities upbraided, *Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*: in their pulpits he daily preached, and those places were the theatres upon which his miracles were wrought; other cities only heard, these saw; but where he preached most he prevailed least; like some fishermen, he caught least in his own pond. Observe, 2. What he upbraids them for; not for disrespect to his person, but for disobedience to his doctrine; *because they repented not*. The great design of Christ, both in the doctrines which he preached, and in the miracles which he wrought, was to bring men to repentance; that is, to forsake their sins, and live well. Observe, 3. Whom he upbraids them

with; *Tyre* and *Sidon*, *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*; nations rude and barbarous, out of the pale of the church, ignorant of a Saviour, and of the way of salvation by him. Learn, That the higher a people rise under the means, the lower they fall if they miscarry. They that have been nearest to conversion, and not yet converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged. Capernaum's sentence shall exceed Sodom's for severity, because she exceeded Sodom in the enjoyment of means and mercy. The case of those who are impenitent under the gospel, is of all others the most dangerous, and their damnation shall be heaviest and most severe. Sodom, the stain of mankind, a city soaked in the dregs of villany; yet this hell upon earth shall have a milder hell at the last day of judgment, than unbelieving Capernaum, as the next verse informs us, verse 23.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

This city lying under greater guilt than the rest, Christ names it by itself, without the rest: nay, he doth not only name it, but notify it, as being lifted up to heaven by signal favours and privileges, namely, Christ's presence, Christ's preaching and miracles. Observe, 1. Capernaum's privileges enjoyed, though a poor obscure place in itself, yet she was by the person, ministry, and miracles of Christ, lifted up to heaven. Learn thence, That gospel-ordinances and church-privileges enjoyed, are a mighty honour and advancement to the poorest persons and obscurest places. Observe, 2. An heavy doom denounced, *Thou shalt be brought down to hell*; that is, thy condition shall be as sad as that of the worst of men, for thy non-proficiency under the means enjoyed. Learn thence, That gospel-ordinances and church-privileges enjoyed, but not improved, provoke Almighty God to inflict the sorest of judgments upon a people. *Thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.*

24 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Observe here, 1. That there shall be a

day of judgment. 2. That in the day of judgment some sinners shall fare worse than others. There are degrees of punishment among the damned. 3. That the worst of heathens, who never heard of a Saviour, nor ever had an offer of salvation by him, shall fare better in the day of judgment than those that continue impenitent under the gospel. Christ here avouches, that Capernaum's sentence shall exceed Sodom's for severity.

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

In these verses our Saviour glorifies his Father for the wise and free dispensation of his gospel-grace to the meanest and most ignorant; whilst the great and learned men of the world undervalued and despised it. By *wise* and *prudent*, Christ means worldly wise men, particularly scribes and Pharisees, from whom God in judgment did hide the mysteries of the gospel, and said, ye shall not see; because they had closed their eyes, and said, we will not see. By *babes*, understand such as are at the greatest distance in natural consideration from a capacity for such rich and heavenly manifestations. By *hiding these things from the wise and prudent*, we are not to understand God's putting darkness into them, but his leaving them to their own darkness, or denying them that light which they had no desire to see; plainly intimating, that God judicially hides the mysteries of heavenly wisdom from worldly wise men. Learn, 1. That till God reveals himself, his nature and will, no man can know either what he is, or what he requires: *Thou hast revealed.* 2. That the wise men of the world have in all ages despised the mysteries of the gospel, and therefore been judicially given up by God to their own wilful blindness: *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.* 3. That the most ignorant and most humble, not the most learned, if proud, do stand ready to receive and embrace the gospel revelation: *Thou hast revealed them unto babes.* 4. This is no less pleasing to Christ, than it is the pleasure of the Father: *Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.* As if Christ had said, Father, thy election and

choice pleases me, as being the choice and good pleasure of thy wisdom.

27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

In this verse our Saviour opens his commission, and declares, 1. His authority ; that all power is committed to him, as Mediator, from God the Father. 2. His office ; to reveal his Father's mind and will to a lost world. *No man knoweth the Father, but the Son ;* that is, the essence and nature of the Father, the will and counsel of the Father, only as the Son reveals them. Learn, That all our saving knowledge of God is in and through Jesus Christ : he, as the great Prophet of the church, reveals the mind and will of God unto us for our salvation, and no saving knowledge without him.

28 Come unto me all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Here we have a sweet invitation, backed with a gracious encouragement ; Christ invites such as are weary of the burden of sin, of the slavery of Satan, of the yoke of the ceremonial law, to come unto him for rest and ease ; and as an encouragement assures them, that upon their coming to him they shall find rest. Learn, 1. That sin is the soul's laborious burden : *Come unto me, all ye that labour.* Labouring supposes a burden to be laboured under ; this burden is sin's guilt. 2. That such as come to Christ for rest must be laden sinners. 3. That laden sinners not only may, but ought to come to Christ for rest : that they may come, because invited ; they ought to come, because commanded. 4. That the laden sinner, upon his coming, shall find rest. *Come, &c.* Note here, That to come to Christ, in the phrase of the New Testament, is to believe in him, and to become one of his disciples. *John vi. 35. He that cometh unto me shall not hunger, he that believeth on me shall not thirst.*

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Here note, That the phrase of, *Take the yoke*, is judicial : the Jewish doctors speak frequently of the yoke of the law ; the

yoke of the commandments ; and the ceremonies imposed upon the Jews are called a yoke, *Acts xv. 10.* Now as Moses had a yoke, so has Christ : and accordingly observe, 1. Christ's disciples must wear Christ's yoke. This yoke is twofold ; a yoke of instruction, and a yoke of affliction : Christ's law is a yoke of instruction ; it restrains our natural inclinations, it curbs our sensual appetites ; it is a yoke to corrupt nature ; this yoke Christ calls *his yoke*, *Take my yoke upon you* : 1. Because he, as a Lord, lays it upon our necks. 2. Because he, as a Servant, bore it upon his own neck first, before he laid it upon ours. Observe, 2. That the way and manner how to bear Christ's yoke must be learnt of Christ himself, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me* ; that is, learn of me, both what to bear, and how to bear. Observe, 3. That Christ's humility and lowly-mindedness, is a great encouragement to christians to come unto him, and learn of him, both how to obey his commands, and how to suffer his will and pleasure. *Learn of me, for I am meek.*

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Observe here, 1. Christ's authority and greatness : he has power to impose a yoke, and inflict a burden. *My yoke ; my burden.* 2. His clemency and goodness, in imposing an easy yoke, and a light burden. *My yoke is easy, my burden is light* ; that is, my service is good and gainful, profitable and useful ; not only tolerable, but delightful : and as is my yoke, such is my burden ; the burden of my precepts, the burden of my cross, both light, not absolutely, but comparatively ; the weight of my cross is not comparable with the glory of my crown. Learn, That the service of Christ, though hard and intolerable to corrupt nature, yet is a most desirable and delightful service to grace or renewed nature ; Christ's service is easy to a spiritual mind. 1. It is easy, as it is a rational service : consonant to right reason, though contradictory to depraved nature. 2. Easy, as it is a spiritual service ; delightful to a spiritual mind. 3. Easy, as it is an assisted service ; considering that we work not in our own strength, but in God's. 4. Easy, when once it is an accustomed service ; though hard to beginners, it is easy to professors ; the farther we walk, the sweeter is our way. 5. Easy, as it is the most gainful service ; having the assurance

of an eternal weight of glory, as the reward of our obedience. Well therefore might our holy Lord say to his followers, *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

CHAP. XII.

Our blessed Saviour in this chapter takes occasion to instruct his disciples in the doctrine of the sabbath; showing, that works of necessity and mercy may be performed upon that day, without any violation of the divine command.

**A**T that time Jesus went on the sabbath-day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

Observe here the poor estate and low condition of Christ's own disciples in this world: they wanted bread, and are forced to pluck the ears of corn to satisfy their hunger. God sometimes suffers his dearest children in this world to fall into straits, and to taste of want, for the trial of their faith, and dependence upon his power and providence.

2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath-day.

Observe here, 1. The persons finding fault with this action of the disciples, the Pharisees; many of whom accompanied our Saviour, not out of any good intentions, but only with a design to cavil at, and quarrel with, every thing that either Christ or his disciples said or did. Observe, 2. The action which they found fault with: the disciples' plucking off the ears of corn on the sabbath-day. Where note, It is not theft which the disciples are accused of by the Pharisees; for to take in our necessity so much of our neighbour's goods as we may reasonably suppose that, if he were present, and knew our circumstances, he would give us, is no theft; but it was a servile labour on the sabbath, in gathering the corn, that the Pharisees scrupled: plucking the ears was looked upon as a sort of reaping. Learn thence, How zealous hypocrites are for the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the weightier; and how superstitiously addicted to the outward ceremonies, placing all holiness in the observation of them.

3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him: 4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the

shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or, have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? 6 But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple.

In these words our Saviour defends the action of his disciples in plucking the ears of corn in their necessity, by a double argument. 1. From David's example: necessity freed him from fault in eating the consecrated bread, which none but the priests might lawfully eat; for in cases of necessity, a ceremonial precept must give place to a moral duty: works of mercy and necessity, for preserving our lives, and the better fitting us for sabbath-services, are certainly lawful on the sabbath-day. 2. From the example of the priests in the temple who upon the sabbath do break the outward rest of the day, by killing their sacrifices, and many other acts of bodily labour, which would be accounted sabbath-profanation, did not the service of the temple require and justify it. Now, saith our Saviour if the temple-service can justify labour on the sabbath, I am greater than the temple, and my authority and service can justify what my disciples have done. From the whole we learn, That acts of mercy, which tend to fit us for works of piety, not only may, but ought to be, done on the sabbath-day.

7 But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Learn hence, That the law of mercy is much more excellent than the law of ceremonies; and where both cannot be observed, the less must give place to the greater. God never intended that the ceremonies of his service in the first table, should hinder works of mercy prescribed in the second table. All God's commands are for man's good. Where both cannot be obeyed, he will have the moral duty performed, and the ceremonial service omitted: *he will have mercy and not sacrifice*; that is, he will have mercy rather than sacrifice, where both cannot be had.

8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day.

As if Christ had said, "I, who am Lord of the sabbath, declare to you, that I have a power to dispense with the observation of it: and it is my will that the sabbath, which was appointed for man, should yield to man's safety and welfare." Christ the Son of man was really the Son of God: and as such had power over the sabbath, to dispense with it, yea, to abrogate and change it, at his pleasure.

9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue. 10 And, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-days? that they might accuse him. 11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? 12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-days.

Here we have another dispute betwixt our Saviour and the Pharisees concerning the sabbath; whether it be a breach of that day, mercifully to heal a person having a withered hand? Christ confutes them from their own practice, telling the Pharisees, that they themselves judged it lawful to help out a sheep, or an ox, if fallen into a pit on that day: how much more ought the life of a man to be preferred! Here we may remark, how inveterate a malice the Pharisees had against our Saviour: when they could find no crime to charge him with, they blame him for working a merciful and miraculous cure upon the sabbath-day. When envy and malice (which are evermore quick-sighted) can find no occasion of quarrel, they will invent one, against the innocent.

13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. 14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. 15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them

all; 16 And charged them that they should not make him known:

Observe, 1. The merciful and miraculous cure wrought by our Saviour's power upon the impotent man: *he said unto him, Stretch out thine hand, and his hand was restored.* Observe, 2. What a contrary effect this cure had upon the Pharisees; instead of convincing them, they conspire against him: Christ's enemies, when arguments fail, fall to violence. Observe, 3. The prudent means which our Saviour uses for his own preservation, *he withdrew himself.* Christ's example teaches his ministers their duty; to avoid the hands of persecutors, and prudently to preserve their lives, unless when their sufferings are like to do more good than their lives. Observe, 4. The great humility of Christ in concealing his own praises; he had no ambition that the fame of his miracles should be spread abroad, for he sought not his own glory; neither would he by the noise of his miracles enrage the Pharisees against him to take away his life; knowing that his time was not yet come, and he had much work to do before his death.

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 18 Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. 19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. 20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

That is, our blessed Saviour did those good acts before spoken of, that it might appear that he was the true Messiah prophesied of by Isaias the prophet, chap. xlii. 1, 2. Behold my servant whom I have set apart for accomplishing the work of salvation for a lost world; he by the fulness of my Spirit shall teach the nations the way of truth and righteousness; he shall not subdue men by force and violence, but, as the Prince of Peace, shall deal gently with the weak, and cherish the least measures of grace, and degrees of goodness. Observe here, 1. A description of Christ as Mediator

he is God the Father's *Servant*, employed in the most noble service, namely, that of instructing and saving a lost world. Observe, 2. With what meekness and gentleness Christ sets up his spiritual kingdom in the world; he doth not with noise and clamour, with force and violence, subdue and conquer; but with meekness and gentleness gains persons' consent to his government and authority. Observe, 3. The gentle carriage of Christ in treating those of infirmer grace; he doth and will graciously preserve and tenderly cherish the smallest beginnings, the weakest measures, and the lowest degrees, of sincere grace, which he observes in any of his children and people. By the *bruised reed* and *smoking flax*, understand such as are broken with the sense of sin, such as are weak in faith, such as are so much overpowered by corruption, that they do rather smoke than burn or shine; such as are thus low and mean in spirituals, Christ will not break with his power, nor quench with his rebukes, till he has perfected their conversion, and their weak grace is become victorious.

22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, inasmuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. 23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David? 24. But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

As a farther instance of Christ's miraculous power, he healeth one whom the devil had cast into a disease which deprived him both of speech and sight: at this miracle the multitude wonder, saying, *Is not this the son of David?* that is, the promised *Messias*. The Pharisees hearing this, with great bitterness and contempt said, *This fellow casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils*. Observe from hence, How obstinacy and malice will make men misconstrue the actions of the most holy and innocent; Christ casteth out devils, say the Pharisees, by the help of the devil. There never was any person so good, nor any action so gracious, but they have been subject both to censure and misconstruction. The best way is to square our actions by the right rule of justice and charity, and then

let the world pass their censures at their pleasure. When the holy and innocent Jesus was thus assaulted, what wonder is it if we his sinful servants be branded on all sides by reviling tongues! Why should we expect better treatment than the Son of God.

25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: 26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? 27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. 29 Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. 30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Our blessed Saviour, to clear his innocence, and to convince the Pharisees of the unreasonableness of this their calumny and false accusations, offers several arguments to their consideration. 1. That it was very unlikely that Satan should lend him this power to use it against himself. As Satan has a kingdom, so he has wit enough to preserve his kingdom, and will do nothing to weaken his own interest. Now if I have received my power from Satan for destroying him and his kingdom, then is Satan divided against himself. 2. Our Saviour tells them, they might with as much reason attribute all miracles to the devil, as those that were wrought by him. There were certain Jews among themselves, who cast out devils in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Christ asks the Pharisees, by what power these their children cast them out; They acknowledged that those did it by the power of God; and there was no cause but their malice, why they should not acknowledge that what he did was by the same power. *If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you; that is, the Messias is come, because he*



wrought these miracles to prove that he was the Messiah. 3. Another argument to prove that the miracles which Christ wrought were by the power of God, and not by the help of Satan, is this: The devil is very strong and powerful, and there is no power but God's only that is stronger than his: Now, says Christ, If I were not assisted by a divine power, I could never cast out this strong man; who reigns in the world as in his house: it must be a stronger than the strong man that shall bind Satan: and who is he but the God of strength?

31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against the Holy Ghost* shall not be forgiven unto men. 32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Observe, 1. How our Saviour makes a difference betwixt speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost. By *speaking against the Son of man*, is meant all those reproaches that were cast upon our Saviour's person as Man, without reflecting upon his divine power as God, which he testified by his miracles. Such were their reproaching him with the meanness of his birth, their censuring him for a Wine-bibber and a Glutton, and the like. But by *speaking against the Holy Ghost*, is meant, their blaspheming and reproaching that divine power whereby he wrought his miracles; which was an immediate reflection upon the Holy Spirit, and a blaspheming of him. Observe, 2. The nature of this sin of speaking against the Holy Ghost: it consisteth in this, that the Pharisees seeing our Saviour work miracles, and cast out devils by the Spirit of God, contrary to the conviction of their own minds, they maliciously ascribed his miracles to the power of the devil, charging him to be a sorcerer and a magician, and to have a familiar spirit, by whose help he did those mighty works; when in truth he did them by the Spirit of God. Observe, 3. That this sin above all others is called unpardonable, and upon what account it is so. The case of such blasphemers of the Holy Spirit, is not only

dangerous, but desperate; because they resist their last remedy, and oppose the best means for their conviction. What can God do more to convince a man that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, than to work miracles for that purpose? Now if when men see plain miracles wrought, they will say it is not God that works them, but the devil; as if Satan would conspire against himself, and seek the ruin of his own kingdom; there is no way left to convince such persons, but they must and will continue in their opposition to truth, to their inevitable condemnation.

33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

These words may either refer to the Pharisees, or to Christ himself. If to the Pharisees, the sense is, You hypocritical Pharisees show yourselves what you are by your words and actions, even as the fruit sheweth what the tree is. If they refer to Christ, then they are an appeal to the Pharisees themselves, to judge of our Saviour and his doctrine by the miracles which he wrought. If he wrought by the devil, his works would be as bad as the devil's; but if his works were good, they must own them to be wrought by the power of God. The expression implies, that a man may be known by his actions, as a tree may be known by his fruit; yet not by a single action, but by a series of actions; not by a particular act, but by our general course.

34 O generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Note here, 1. The fervency and zeal of our Saviour's spirit in the compellation given to the Pharisees: he calls them a *generation of vipers*; intimating that they were a venomous and dangerous sort of men. Learn hence, That it is not always railing and indiscreet zeal to call wicked men by such names as their sin deserves. Observe farther, From our Saviour's saying, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*; that the heart is the fountain both of words and actions: according as the heart is, so is the current of men's words and actions, either good or evil.

35 A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth

good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.

Observe here, A double treasure discovered in the heart of man. 1. An evil treasure of sin and corruption, both natural and acquired, from whence proceed evil things. Now this is called a *treasure*, not for the preciousness of it, but for the abundance of it; a little doth not make a treasure: and also for the continuance of it; though it be perpetually overflowing in the life, yet doth the heart continue full; this treasure of original corruption in man's nature may be drawn low in this life, by sanctifying grace, but it never can be drawn dry. 2. Here is a good treasure of grace discovered in a sanctified and renewed man; which is the source and spring from whence all gracious actions do proceed and flow. For as the heart of man by nature is the fountain from whence all sin springs, so the heart renewed by grace is the source and spring from whence all gracious actions do proceed and flow.

36 But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

*I say unto you*; I, that have always been in my Father's bosom, and fully know his mind; I, that am constituted Judge of quick and dead, and understand the rule of judgment; I, even I, do assure you that every word that has no tendency to promote the glory of God, or some way the good of others, will fall under censure at the great day, without an intervening repentance. Note here, That there are two sorts of words for which we must be judged; *saful* words, and idle words. Sinful words are blasphemous words, censorious words, lying and slandering words. Idle words are such as savour nothing of wisdom and piety; that have no tendency to make men either wiser or better: how light soever men make of their words now, yet in God's balance another day they will be found to weigh very heavy. What a bridle should this text be to extravagant tongues! see Col. ix. 6. *Let your speech be always seasoned with salt*, that is, with wisdom, *bc.* for our words may mischief others a long time after they are spoken. How many years may a frothy or a filthy word, a profane scoff, an atheistical jest, stick in the minds of them that hear it, after the

tongue that spake it is dead! A word spoken is physically transient, but morally permanent.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Observe here, The argument which our Saviour uses to move us to watchfulness over our words: *by our words we shall be justified*; not meritoriously, but declaratively: good words declare goodness in ourselves, and we shall be declared good to others by our words, if our words and actions do correspond and agree with one another. *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*; that is, according to the right or wrong using of the tongue, we may judge and gather whether men are dead or alive as to God; and bound for heaven or hell. Doubtless justification or condemnation will pass upon men at the day of judgment, according to the state of the person, and frame of the heart; now our words will justify or condemn us in that day, as evidences of the state and frame of the soul. We use to say, such witnesses hanged a man; that is, the evidence they gave cast and condemned him. O think of this seriously: if words evidence the state of thy soul, what a hellish state must thy soul be in, who hast inured thyself to the language of hell, to oaths and curses; sins whereby the devil cheats men more than by any sins whatsoever! They are damned for them, yet get nothing by them, neither profit nor pleasure.

38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 42 The queen of the south shall rise

up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Observe here, 1. The request which the Pharisees make to Christ; *Master, we would see a sign from thee.* But had not Christ showed them signs enough already? What were all the miracles wrought in their sight, but convincing signs that he was the true Messiah? But infidelity mixed with obstinacy is never satisfied. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's answer to the Pharisees' request: he tells them that they should have one sign more, to wit, that of his resurrection from the dead: *For as Jonas lay buried three days in the whale's belly, and was then wonderfully restored, so should (and did) our Saviour continue in the grave part of three natural days, and then rise again.* Observe, 3. How Christ declares the inexcusableness of their state, who would not be convinced by the former miracles he had wrought that he was the true Messiah; nor yet be brought to believe in him by this last sign or miracle of his resurrection. The Ninevites shall condemn the Pharisees, *they repented at the preaching of Jonas*; but these would not be convinced by the preaching and miracles of Jesus. *The queen of Sheba, who also came from the south to hear and admire the wisdom of Solomon, shall rise up in judgment against those that reject Christ, who is the Wisdom of the Father; and the doctrine delivered by him, which was the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Learn, that the sins of infidelity and impenitency are exceedingly heightened, and their guilt aggravated, from the means afforded by God to bring a people to faith and obedience. The sin of the Pharisees in rejecting Christ's miracles and ministry, was by far greater than that of the Ninevites, had they rejected Jonah's message and ministry sent by God amongst them.

43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. 45 Then

goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

The design and scope of this parable is to show that the Pharisees, by rejecting the gospel and refusing to believe in Christ, were in a seven-fold worse condition than if the gospel had never been preached to them, and a Saviour had never come among them; because by our Saviour's ministry Satan was in some sort cast out: but for rejecting Christ and his grace, Satan had got a seven-fold stronger possession of them now than before. From this parable learn, 1. That Satan is an unclean spirit; he has lost his original purity, his holy nature, in which he was created, and is become universally filthy in himself; no means being allowed him by God for purging of his filthy and unclean nature. Nay, he is a perfect enemy to purity and holiness, maligning all that love it, and would promote it. 2. That Satan is a restless and unquiet spirit; being cast out of heaven, he can rest nowhere; when he is either gone out of a man through policy, or cast out of a man by power, he has no content or satisfaction, till he returns into a filthy heart, where he delights to be as the swine in miry places. 3. That wicked and profane sinners have this unclean spirit dwelling in them: their hearts are Satan's house and habitation; and the lusts of pride and unbelief, malice and revenge, envy and hypocrisy, these are the garnishings of Satan's house. Man's heart was God's house by creation, it is now Satan's by usurpation and judiciary tradition. 4. That Satan by the preaching of the gospel may seem to go out of persons, and they become sober and civilized; yet may he return to his old habitation, and the last end of that man may be worse than the beginning.

46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. 47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. 48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother?

and who are my brethren ? 49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren ! 50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Observe here, 1. The verity of Christ's human nature ; he had affinity and consanguinity with men, persons near in blood to him, called his brethren, that is, his cousin-germans. 2. That the holy virgin herself was not wholly free from failings and infirmities ; for here she does untimely and unseasonably interrupt our Saviour when preaching to the people, and employed about his Father's business. 3. That Christ did not neglect his holy mother, nor disregard his near relations ; only showed that he preferred his Father's service before them. Learn, 4. How dear believers are to Jesus Christ ; he prefers his spiritual kindred before his natural. Alliance in faith, and spiritual relation to Christ, is much nearer and dearer than alliance by blood : to bear Christ in the heart is much better than to bear him in the womb. Blessed be God, this greatest privilege is not denied to us even now : though see Christ we cannot, yet love him we may ; his bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual presence is not denied us. Though Christ be not ours, in house, in arms, in affinity, in consanguinity, yet in heart, in faith, in love, in service, he is or may be ours. Verily, spiritual regeneration brings men into a more honourable relation to Christ than natural generation ever did. *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

#### CHAP. XIII.

**T**HE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side. 2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat ; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. 3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying,—

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of an awakening sermon preached by our Saviour to the Pharisees. In this chapter we are acquainted with the con-

tinuance of his preaching to the multitude, where three things are observable. 1. Our Lord's assiduity and unwearied diligence in preaching of the gospel ; for this sermon was made the same day with that in the former chapter, ver. 1. *The same day went Jesus out, and sat by the sea-side.* A good pattern for the preachers of the gospel to follow. How ashamed may we be to preach once a week, when our Lord preached twice a day ! Observe, 2. The place our Lord preached in, a ship ; not that he declined the temple or the synagogue, when he had the opportunity ; but in the want of them, Christ thought an house, a mountain, a ship, no unmeet place to preach in. It is not the place that sanctifies the ordinance, but the ordinance that sanctifies the place. Observe, 3. The manner of our Lord's preaching ; It was by parables and similitudes ; which was an ancient way of instruction among the Jews, and a very convincing way ; at once working upon men's minds, memories, and affections ; making the mind attentive, the memory retentive, and the auditors inquisitive after the interpretation of the parable. Some are of opinion that our Saviour's parables were suited to his hearers' employments, some of whom being husbandmen, he resembles his doctrine to seed sown in the field ; for thus he speaks :

—Behold, a sower went forth to sow : 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls come and devoured them up. 5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth ; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth : 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched ; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them. 8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. 8 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The scope of this parable is to show that there are four several sorts of hearers of the word, and but one sort only that hear to a saving advantage : also to show us the cause of the different success of the

word preached. Here observe, 1. The sowers, Christ and his apostles; he the prime and principal Sower, they the secondary and subordinate seedsmen. Christ sows his own field, his ministers sow his field; he sows his own seed, they sow his seed. Woe unto us, if we sow our own seed, and not Christ's. Observe, 2. The seed sown, the word of God. Fabulous legends, and unwritten traditions, which the seedsmen of the church of Rome sow, these are not seed, but chaff; or their own seed, not Christ's. Our Lord's field must be sown with his own seed, not with mixed grain. Learn, 1. That the word of God preached is like seed sown in the furrows of the field. As seed has a fructifying virtue in it, by which it increases and brings forth more of its own kind; so has the word of God a quickening power, to regenerate and make alive dead souls. Learn, 2. That the seed of the word, where it is most plentifully sown, it is not alike fruitful. As seed doth not thrive in all ground alike, so neither doth the word fructify alike in the hearts of men. There is a difference both from the nature of the soil and from the influence of the Spirit. Learn, 3. That the cause of the word's unfruitfulness is very different, and not the same in all: in some, it is the policy of Satan, that bird of prey which follows God's plough, and steals away the precious seed. In others, it is a hard heart of unbelief; in others, the cares of the world, like thorns, choke the word, overgrow the good seed, draw away the moisture of the earth, and the heart of the soil, and hinder the influences of the sun. The far greater part of hearers are fruitless and unprofitable hearers. Learn, 4. That the best ground doth not bring forth fruit alike; some good ground brings forth more, and some less: *some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold*. In like manner a person may be a profitable hearer of the word, although he doth not bring forth so great a proportion as others, provided he brings forth as much as he can.

10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

Here we have the disciples' question, and our Saviour's answer. Their question is, *Why speakest thou to the people in parables,*

which they do not understand? They cannot see the soul of thy meaning, through the body of thy parables. Christ answers, "To you, my disciples, and such as you are, who love the truth, and desire to obey it, the Spirit gives you an effective, operative, and experimental knowledge, not barely to know these things, but to believe them, and feel the power of them in and upon your own hearts; but the generality of hearers do satisfy and content themselves with a bare notional knowledge of what they hear; a parable therefore is well enough for them." Learn, 1. That the doctrines of the gospel are mysterious. 2. That it is a matchless and invaluable privilege, practically and savingly to understand and know gospel-mysteries. 3. That this privilege all are not sharers in, nor partakers of, but only those to whom it is given: *Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to them it is not given.*

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

That is, whosoever improves the measures of grace received, shall obtain farther measures and degrees of it: *but from him that doth not improve what he has already received, shall be taken away that which to himself or others he seemed to have*, his common gifts and moral endowments. Learn, That where there are beginnings of true grace, and a right and wise improvement of it, God will make rich additions of more grace to the present stock which we have received.

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross; and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and *their* eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart,

and should be converted, and I should heal them.

These words of our blessed Saviour, as I conceive, have a peculiar reference and relation to the Pharisees, who attended upon Christ's ministry, not with an honest simplicity of mind, to be instructed by it, but to carp and cavil at it. Our Saviour tells them, he had formerly spoken things very plainly and clearly to them, and also wrought miracles before them, to convince them of the divinity of his person and the verity of his doctrine: but they would not believe either his person or his doctrine to be from God; and therefore he would now speak to them in dark parables, that they may be judicially blinded: they sinfully shut their eyes against the clearest light, and said they would not see; and now Christ closes their eyes judicially, and says, they shall not see. Learn hence, To acknowledge the divine justice, which speaks darkly to them that despise the light: such as see and yet see not, they shall see the shell, but not the kernel: they shall hear the parable, but not understand the spiritual sense and meaning of it. When wilful blindness of mind is added to natural blindness, it is a just and righteous thing with God to superadd judicial blindness, and give them obstinacy of heart, his curse unto them.

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. 17 For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

Here our Saviour pronounces such of his disciples and followers blessed, as received the truths of the gospel so far as they were already taught them; he assures them that they shall receive farther light, and fuller measures of spiritual illumination: *Blessed are your eyes, for they see.* Learn, That such as have received the least measure of spiritual knowledge and saving illumination, and do improve it, are in a happy and blessed condition; for as they are capable of farther measures of divine knowledge, so shall they be partakers of them.

18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 19 When any one

heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way-side. 20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. 22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

As if our Lord had said, "You, my disciples, who are not satisfied with a sound of words, I will explain to you the sense and signification of this parable: the scope of which is, to show the different effects which the word of God has upon men's hearts, and the reason of that difference. The seed is the word, the sower is the preacher, the soil is the heart and soul of man." Now our Saviour assures us, that the hearts of some hearers are like highway ground, in which the seed is not covered with the harrow of meditation; others are like stony ground, in which the word has no root; no root in their understandings, memories, conscience, will, or affections: but *they are offended*, either at the depth and profoundness of the word, or at the sanctity or strictness of it, or at the plainness and simplicity of it. Again, some hearers our Lord compares to thorny ground. Thorns are covetous desires, which choke the good seed, shadow the blade when sprung up, keep off the influences of the sun, and draw away the fatness of the soil from the seed. All these effects have thorns in and among the seed; and the like effects have worldly affections and covetous desires in the heart of man, rendering the word unfruitful

and unprofitable. But the good christian hears the word attentively, keeps it retentively, believes it stedfastly, applies it particularly, practises it universally, and brings forth fruit with patience and perseverance; fruit that will redound to his account, in the great day of account. Learn, 1. That no hearers are in Christ's account good hearers of the word, but such as bring forth the fruits of an holy, humble, and peaceable conversation. 2. That a person may be a good hearer of the word, if he brings forth the best fruit he can, though it be not in so great a proportion as others do; as some ground brings forth thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold: in like manner do all the sincere hearers of the word, they all bring forth fruit, though not all alike; all in sincerity and reality, though not all to the same degree, and none to perfection. Observe, lastly, Satan is here compared to the fowls of the air, which pick up the seed before it takes any root in the earth. The devil is very jealous of the success of the word, and therefore labours all he can to destroy the word, before it comes to operate upon the heart: which he doth sometimes by the cares of the world, sometimes by vain companions, who prove mere quench-coals unto early conviction: if he can steal away the word, or choke it, he has his desire and design.

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first

the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The design and scope of this parable is, to show that there is no expectation of universal purity in the church of God in this life; but as the tares and the wheat grow together in the same field, so hypocrites and sincere christians are and will be intermixed in the same church, and can hardly be discerned one from the other. St. Jerome observes, That in the eastern countries, the tares and the wheat were so like one another, whilst they were in the blade, that there was no knowing them asunder. Learn, 1. That in the outward and visible church there ever has been and will be a mixture of good and bad, of saints and sinners, of hypocrites and sincere christians, until the day of judgment. 2. That in that day Christ will make a thorough and a perfect separation, and divide the tares from the wheat: that is, the righteous from the wicked. 3. That in the mean time none ought to be so offended at this mixture in the church, as to separate from church-communion on that account: until the harvest it is not to be expected that the tares and wheat should be perfectly separated. Yet observe, 4. That though the tares are forbidden to be plucked up when sown, yet it is the church's duty, all she can, to hinder their sowing. Though we must not root the wicked up, yet we must prevent the rooting of wickedness all we can. Our Saviour, that forbade to pluck up the tares, did not forbid to hinder their sowing. Note here, How vain is the collection of the Erastians from hence, that the wicked are not to be cut off by excommunication from the communion of the church; nor doth this text prove that the magistrates may not cut off evil-doers; seeing this was not spoken to them, but to the ministers of the church.

31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: 32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. 33 Another parable spake he unto

them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. 34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: 35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Our Saviour's design in this parable is, to show how the gospel, from small and little, from unlikely and contemptible beginnings, shall spread and increase, fructify and grow up: like as mustard-seed, one of the smallest of grains, grows up to a considerable tallness: and as a little leaven turns a great heap of meal into its own nature; so the gospel shall spread and increase, nations and countries becoming christian. Learn, That how small beginnings soever the gospel had in its first plantation, yet by the fructifying blessing of God it has had and shall have a wonderful increase.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. 37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man: 38 The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one: 39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil: the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. 40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 41 The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; 42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun,

in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The parable of the tares of the field Christ is pleased to explain to his disciples after this manner. The person sowing good seed was himself, *the Son of man*; who first planted the gospel: the field in which the seed was sown, was the world; that is, the church in the world: the *good seed*, called, *the children of the kingdom*, are sincere christians; the *tares*, called *the children of the wicked one*, are profane sinners, and unsound hypocrites: the *enemy* is the devil, the *harvest* is the end of the world, and the *angels* are the reapers. Learn, 1. That the mixture of the tares and the wheat, of the righteous and the wicked, must and shall remain in the church unto the end of the world. 2. That in the end of the world the angels shall perform the work of separation, gathering the righteous from among the wicked; when every one's harvest shall be according to his fruit: *the righteous shining in the kingdom of their Father, the wicked cast into a furnace of fire.*

44 Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45 Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls: 46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

By the treasure hid in the field, and the pearl of great price, are understood, Christ, the grace of the gospel, and the way to life and salvation therein discovered: he that is thoroughly convinced of the worth and excellency of Christ's grace, will part with all that he has to purchase and obtain it. Learn, That the sinner who will have an interest in Christ, and a part in gospel-grace, must part with all that he has to purchase and obtain them, even his goods and lands, with his wife and children; for Christ and his grace are a real good, a substantial good, a durable good; he outbids all the offers that the world can make, and therefore it is our wisdom to part with all for him, and especially our sins, dearer to us than all the rest.

47 Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into



the sea, and gathered of every kind : 48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. 49 So shall it be at the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. 50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The design and scope of the parable also is, to set forth the state of the gospel-church, which is like a floor, where chaff is mixed with wheat ; a field, where tares are mixed with good corn ; a net, where bad fishes are involved with the good. As the wheat must not be removed out of the floor before the time of winnowing ; nor the tares gathered out of the field before the time of reaping ; nor the good fishes break through the net to get from the bad before the time of separation ; so must not christians forsake a church's communion, because of the present mixture of good and bad in the church. For a mixed communion in the church, and the good christians communicating with the bad, doth neither defile the ordinances of Christ nor pollute those that sincerely join in them.

51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things ? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. 52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.

Observe here, 1. The title which our Saviour puts upon gospel-ministers ; they are household stewards. 2. He points out the office of those stewards ; and that is, to provide for the household both with plenty and variety. *He must bring forth out of his treasure in plenty ; and things new and old* for their variety. There are two essential qualifications in a steward, faithfulness and prudence ; he must be honest and faithful, in bringing out of his own treasure, not another's ; and he must be prudent, in bringing things new, as well as old ; not new truths, but old truths in a new dress ; lest the household, by always feeding upon the same dish, do nauseate it, instead of being nourished by it.

53 And it came to pass, *that*, when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. 54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works ? 55 Is not this the carpenter's son ? Is not his mother called Mary ? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas ? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us ? Whence then hath this *man* all these things ? 57 And they were offended in him.—

Observe here, 1. Christ's tender and compassionate regard to his own countrymen, the people of Galilee and Nazareth ; he preached to them in their synagogue. 2. The effect which his doctrine had upon them ; *they were astonished at it*, but not converted by it ; they admire, but did not believe. 3. The cause of their rejecting Christ's ministry was the meanness of his person, the contemptibleness of his outward condition, the poverty of his relations : *Is not this the carpenter's Son ?* Mark vi. 3. he is called *the carpenter* ; whence the fathers concluded, that our Saviour, during the time of his obscure privacy, wrought at the trade of Joseph his reputed father ; and Justin Martyr says, he made ploughs and yokes. Sure we are, our Lord spent no time in idleness, though we are not certain how he employed his time before he entered upon his public ministry. Note, That the poverty and meanness of Christ's condition was that which multitudes stumbled at ; and which kept many, yea, most, from believing on him. None but a spiritual eye can discern beauty in an humbled Saviour : *Is not this the Son of the carpenter ?* 2. That it is no impediment to nor hindrance of our faith, that we never saw Christ's person in the flesh, nor knew his parentage and education ; for here are his own countrymen, who daily saw his person, heard his doctrine, and were witnesses of his holy conversation, yet instead of believing in him they were offended at him.

—But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

Our Saviour tells them, he doth not

wonder that so many of his own countrymen, to whom he had been so familiarly known, did despise his person and reject his doctrine; for a prophet generally has least esteem where he has been brought up; because perhaps the follies of his childhood, and indecencies of his youth, are remembered and reported to his disparagement. Learn, 1. That there is a real tribute of honour due and payable to every prophet or faithful minister of Jesus Christ. 2. That the ministers of Christ, for the most part, have least honour from their own countrymen, to whom they are best known. 3. That although it be so, yet this may not be through their own fault, for Christ was so amongst his.

58 And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

This sin not only locks up the heart of a sinner, but also binds up the hands of a Saviour. Unbelief obstructed Christ's miraculous works when on earth, and it obstructs his gracious works now in heaven. Ah! cursed unbelief! which shuts up, O sinner, thy heart, and shuts out thy Saviour, and will effectually shut thee out of heaven, and not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it! *Mark* xiv. 16. Christ was unable, because they were unwilling; his impotency was occasioned by their infidelity: he did not, because he would not; and that he would not, proceeded from a defect in their faith, not from any deficiency in Christ's power: their unbelief bound his hands, and hindered the execution of his power.

#### CHAP. XIV.

The former part of this chapter gives us an account of the death of John the Baptist, together with the occasion of it, which was, his plain and faithful reproving of Herod for the uncleanness he lived in.

**A**T that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus; 2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

Observe here, 1. How strange it was that Herod should not hear of the fame of Jesus till now: all the country and adjoining regions had rung of his fame, only Herod's court hears nothing. Miserable is that greatness which keeps princes from the knowledge of Jesus Christ. How plain it is from hence, that our Saviour came not

at court! He once sent indeed a message to that fox (Herod) whose den he would not approach; teaching us, by his example, not to affect, but to avoid, outward pomp and glory. The courts of princes are too often a very bad air for piety and religion to thrive in. Observe, 2. The misconstruction of Herod, when he heard of our Saviour's fame: this, says he, is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded. His conscience told him he had offered an unjust violence to an innocent man; and now he is afraid that he is come again to be revenged on him for his head. A wicked man needs no worse tormentor than his own mind. O the terrors and tortures of a guilty conscience! how great are the anxieties of guilt, and the fears of divine displeasure, than which nothing is more stinging and perpetually tormenting!

3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. 4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. 5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

Observe here, 1. The person that puts the holy Baptist to death; it was *Herod*, it was Herod the king, it was Herod that invited John to preach at court, and heard him gladly. 1. It was Herod Antipas, son to that Herod who sought Christ's life, chap. ii. Cruelty runs in a blood. Herod, the murderer of John who was the forerunner of Christ, descended from that Herod who would have murdered Christ himself. 2. It was Herod the king. Sad! that princes, who should always be nursing-fathers to, should at any time be the bloody butchers of, the prophets of God. 3. It was Herod that heard John gladly: John took the ear and the heart of Herod, and Herod binds the hands and feet of John. O how inconstant is a carnal heart to good resolutions! The word has oft-times an awakening influence, where it doth not leave an abiding impression upon the minds of men. Observe, 2. The cause of the Baptist's death; it was for telling a king of his crime. Herod cut off that head whose tongue was so bold to tell him of his faults. The persecution which the prophets of God fall under, is usually for telling great men of their sins; men in power are impatient

of reproof, and imagine that their authority gives them a licence to transgress. Observe, 3. The plain dealing of the Baptist in reproving Herod for his crime, which in one act was adultery, incest, and violence. Adultery, that he took another's wife; incest, that he took his brother's wife; violence, that he took her in spite of her husband. Therefore John doth not mince the matter, and say, It is not convenient; but, *It is not lawful for thee to have her*: it was not the crown and sceptre of Herod that could daunt the faithful messenger of God. There ought to meet in God's ministers both courage and impartiality. Courage, in fearing no faces; impartiality, in sparing no sins. For none are so great but they are under the authority and command of the law of God.

6 But when Herod's birth-day was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. 7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. 8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. 9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. 10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. 11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

Several observables are here to be taken notice of. 1. The time of this execrable murder: it was upon Herod's birth-day. It was an ancient custom among the eastern kings to celebrate their birth-days. Pharaoh's birth-day was kept, *Gen. xl*. Herod's here; both with blood: yet these personal stains do not make the practice unlawful. When we solemnize our birth-day with thankfulness to our Creator and Preserver, for life and being, for protection and preservation to that moment, and commend ourselves to the care of his good providence for the remainder of our days, this is an act of piety and religion. But Herod's birth-day was kept with revelling and feasting, with music and dancing: not that dancing, which in itself is a set, regular, harmonious motion of the body, can be unlawful, any more than walking or run-

ning; although circumstances may make it sinful. But from this disorderly banquet on Herod's birth-day, we learn, That great men's feasts and frolics are too often a season of much sin. Observe, 2. The instigator and promoter of the holy Baptist's death, Herodias and her daughter: that good man falls a sacrifice to the fury and malice, to the pride and scorn, of a lustful woman, for being a rub in the way of her licentious adultery. Resolute sinners, who are mad upon their lusts, run furiously upon their gainsayers, though they be the prophets of God themselves; and resolve to bear down all opposition they meet with in the gratification of their unlawful desires. Observe, 3. With what reluctance Herod consented to this villany: *the king was sorry*. Wicked men oft-times sin with a troubled and disturbed conscience; they have a mighty struggle with themselves before they commit their sins; but at last their lusts get the mastery over their consciences. So did Herod's here; for, 4. Notwithstanding his sorrow, he commands the fact: *he sent and beheaded John in the prison*. And a threefold cord tied him to this performance: 1. The conscience of his oath. See his hypocrisy; he made conscience of a rash oath, who made no scruple of real murder. 2. Respect to his reputation: *them that sat with him* heard him promise, and will be witnesses of his levity, if he did not perform. Insisting upon punctilios of honour, has hazarded the loss of millions of souls. 3. A loathness to discontent Herodias and her daughter. O vain and foolish hypocrite, who dreaded the displeasure of a wanton mistress, before the offending of God and conscience! Observe, 5. These wicked women not only require the Baptist to be beheaded, but that his head be brought in a charger to them. What a dish is here to be served up at a prince's table on his birth-day! a dead man's head swimming in blood! How prodigiously insatiable is cruelty and revenge! Herodias did not think herself safe till John was dead; she could not think him dead till his head was off; she could not think his head off till she had it in her hand. Revenge never thinks it has made sure enough. O how cruel is a wicked heart, that could take pleasure in a spectacle of so much horror! how was that holy head tost by impure and filthy hands! that true and faithful tongue, those sacred lips, those pure eyes, those mortified cheeks, are now insultingly handled by an incest-

tuous harlot, and made a scorn to the drunken eyes of Herod's guests! From the whole learn, 1. That neither the holiest of prophets, nor the best of men, are more secure from violence than from natural death. He that was sanctified in the womb, conceived and born with so much miracle, lived with so much reverence and observation, is now at midnight obscurely murdered in a close prison. Learn, 2. That it is as true a martyrdom to suffer for duty, as for faith: he dies as truly a martyr that dies for doing his duty, as he that dies for professing the faith and bearing witness to the truth.

12 And his disciples came and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus. 13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

The disciples of John hearing that their holy master was thus basely and barbarously murdered, took up his dead body and buried it. Whence we learn, That the faithful servants of God are not ashamed of the sufferings of the saints, but will testify their respect unto them both living and dead. Observe farther, How our blessed Saviour, upon the notice of John's death, flies into the desert for the preservation of his own life. Jesus knew that his hour was not yet come, and therefore he keeps out of Herod's way. It is no cowardice to fly from persecutors, when Christ our Captain both practises it himself, and directs us to it, saying, *When they persecute you in one city, flee, &c.*

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

Observe here, 1. With what condolency and tender sympathy the compassionate Jesus exercised acts of mercy and compassion towards the miserable and distressed; *He was moved with compassion*; that is, touched with an inward sense and feeling of their sorrow: *And he healed their sick.* Those that came to Christ for healing, found three advantages of cure, above the power and performance of any earthly physician, to wit, certainty, bounty, and ease. Certainty, in that all comers were infallibly cured; bounty, in that they were freely

cured, without charge; and ease, in that they were cured without pain.

15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

Note here, 1. The disciples' pity towards the multitude that had long attended upon Christ's ministry in the desert: they, presuming the people hungry, having fasted all the day, request our Saviour to dismiss them, that they may procure some bodily refreshment. Learn hence, That it well becomes the ministers of Christ to respect the bodily necessities, as well as to regard the spiritual wants, of their people. As the bodily father must take care of the soul of his child, so must the spiritual father have respect to the bodily necessities of his children. Observe, 2. The motion which the disciples make on the behalf of the multitude: *Send them away, that they may buy victuals.* Here was a strong charity, but a weak faith. A strong charity, in that they desired the people's relief; but a weak faith, in that they suppose they could not otherwise be relieved, but by sending them away to buy victuals; forgetting that Christ, who had healed the multitude miraculously, could as easily feed them miraculously, if he pleased; all things being equally easy to Omnipotence.

16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's strange answer to the disciples' motion: *They need not depart*, says Christ. *Need not!* Why, the people must either feed or famish. Victuals they must have, and this being a desert place, there was none to be had. Surely then there was need enough. But, 2. Christ's command was more strange than his assertion: *Give ye them to eat*, Alas, poor disciples! they had nothing for themselves to eat: how then should they give the multitude to eat? When Christ requires of us what of ourselves we are unable to perform, it is to show us our impotency and weakness, and to provoke us to look to him *that worketh all our works in us and for us.*

17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Note here, What a poor and slender provision the Lord of the whole earth has for his household and family; five loaves, and those barley: two fishes, and they small: teaching us, that these bodies of ours must be fed, but not pampered. Our belly must not be our master, much less our god. We read but twice that Christ made any entertainments, and both times his guests were fed with loaves and fishes; plain fare and homely diet. The end of food is to sustain nature, we stifle it with a gluttonous variety: meat was ordained for the belly, the belly for the body, the body for the soul, and the soul for God. Observe farther, As the quality of the victuals was plain and coarse, so the quantity of it was small and little: *five loaves and two fishes*. Well might the disciples say, *What are these among so many?* The eye of sense and reason sees an impossibility of those effects which faith can easily apprehend, and divine power more easily produce.

18 He said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass; and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake; and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Observe, 1. How the Master of the feast marshals his guests, he commands them *all to sit down*; none of them reply, "Sit down! but to what? Here are the mouths, but where is the meat? We can soon be set, but whence shall we be served?" Nothing of this: but they obey and expect. O how easy is it to trust God, and rely upon Providence, when there is corn in the barn and bread in the cupboard! But when our stores are all empty, and nothing before us, then to depend upon an invisible bounty is a true and noble act of faith. Observe, 2. The actions performed by our blessed Saviour, *He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and they to the multitude*. 1. *He blessed*, teaching us, by his example, in all our wants to look up to heaven for a supply, to wait upon God for his blessing, and not to sit down to our food as a beast to his forage. 2. *He brake* the loaves. He could have multiplied them whole; why would he rather do it in the breaking? Perhaps to teach us, that we are to expect his blessings in the distribution, rather than in the

reservation, of what he gives us. Scattering is the way to increasing. Not grain hoarded up in the granary, but scattered in the furrows of the field, yields increase. Liberality is the way to riches, and penuriousness the road to poverty. 3. Christ gave the bread thus broken to his disciples, that they might distribute it to the multitude. But why did not our Lord distribute it with his own hand, but by the hands of his disciples? Doubtless to win respect to his disciples from the people. The same course did our Lord take in spiritual distributions. He that could feed the world by his immediate hand, chooses rather by the hands of his ministers to divide the bread of life to all hearers.

20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

They did all eat, not a crumb or a bit, but to satiety and fulness: *they did eat, and were filled*, yet twelve baskets remained: more is left than was at first set on. So many bellies, and yet so many baskets, filled. The miracle was doubled by an act of boundless omnipotency. It is hard to say, which was the greater miracle, the miraculous eating, or the miraculous leaving. If we consider what they ate, we may justly wonder that they left any thing; if what they left, that they ate any thing. Observe farther, These fragments, though of barley-bread and fish-bones, must not be lost; but by our Saviour's command gathered up. The liberal Housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his orts. O how fearful then will the account of those be, who have large and plentiful estates to answer for as lost, being spent upon their lusts in riot and excess!

22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

*Jesus constrained them*; that is, he commanded them to *go away before him*. No doubt they were very loath to leave him, and to go without him; both out of the love which they bare to him and themselves. Such as have once tasted the sweetness of Christ, are hardly drawn away from him: however, as desirous as the disciples were to

stay with Christ, yet at his word of command they depart from him. Where Christ has a will to command, his disciples and followers must have a will to obey.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Observe here, 1. Christ dismisses the multitude, and then retires to pray; teaching us, by his example, when we have to do with God, to dismiss the multitude of our affairs and employments, of our cares and thoughts. O how unseemly it is to have our tongues talking to God, and our thoughts taken up with the world! Observe, 2. The place Christ retires to for prayer, a solitary mountain; not so much for his own need, for he could be alone when he was in company, but to teach us, that when we address ourselves to God in duty, we are to take all the helps, furtherances, and advantages we can, for the doing of it. When we converse with God in duty, O how good is it to *get upon a mountain*, to get our hearts above the world, above worldly employments and worldly cogitations! Observe, 3. The occasion of Christ's prayer; he had sent the disciples to sea, he foresaw the storm arising, and now he gets into a mountain to pray for them, that their faith might not fail them when their troubles were upon them. Learn hence, That it is the singular comfort of the church of God, that in all her difficulties and distresses Christ is interceding for her; when she is on the sea conflicting with the waves, Christ is upon the mountain praying for her preservation.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Note here, The great danger the disciples were in, and the great difficulties they had to encounter with: they were in *the midst of the sea*, they were *tossed with the waves*, *the wind was contrary*, and Christ was absent. The wisdom of God often suffers his church to be tossed upon the waves of affliction and persecution, but it shall not be swallowed up by them: often is this ark of the church upon the waters; seldom off them; but never drowned.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Christ having seen the distress of his disciples on the shore, he hastens to them on the sea. It was not a stormy and tempestuous sea, that could separate betwixt him and them; he that waded through a sea of blood, and through a sea of wrath, to save his people, will walk upon a sea of water to succour and relieve them. But observe, The time when Christ came to help them, not till the fourth watch, a little before the morning. They had been many hours upon the waters, conflicting with the waves, with their fears and dangers. God oft-times lengthens out the troubles of his children before he delivers them; but when they are come to an extremity, that is the season of his succours. As God suffers his church to be brought into extremities before he helps her, so he will help her in extremity. *In the fourth watch Jesus came, &c.*

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

See how the disciples take their Deliverer to be a destroyer: their fears were highest when their Deliverer and deliverance were nearest. God may be coming with salvation and deliverance for his church, when she for the present cannot discern him.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Observe, When the disciples were in the saddest condition, how one word from Christ revives them! It is a sufficient support in all our afflictions to hear Christ's voice speaking to us, and to enjoy his favourable presence with us. Say but, O Saviour, *It is I*; and then little evils do their worst: that one word, *It is I*, is enough to lay all storms, and to calm all tempests.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!

Observe here, 1. The mixture of Peter's faith and distrust; it was faith that said,

*Master* ; it was distrust that said, *if it be thou* ; it was faith that said, *bid me come to thee* ; it was faith that enabled him to step down on the watery pavement ; it was faith that said, *Lord, save me* ; but it was distrust that made him *sink*. O the imperfect composition of faith and fear in the best of saints here on earth ! sincerity of grace is found with the saints here on earth ; perfection of grace with the saints in heaven. Here the saints look forth, fair as the moon, which has some spots in her greatest beauties : hereafter they shall be clear as the sun, whose face is all bright and glorious. Observe, 2. That whilst Peter believes, the sea is as firm as brass under him ; when he begins to fear, then he begins to sink. Two hands upheld Peter ; the hand of Christ's power, and the hand of his own faith. The hand of Christ's power laid hold on Peter, and the hand of Peter's faith laid hold on the power of Christ. If we let go our hold on Christ, we sink ; if he lets go his hold on us, we drown. Now Peter answered his name *Cephas*, and sunk like a stone.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? 32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. 33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Observe here, 1. The mercy of Christ is no sooner sought, but found : *Immediately Jesus put forth his hand and caught him*. O with what speed, and with what assurance, should we flee to that sovereign bounty, from whence never any sutor was sent away empty ! Observe, 2. Though Christ gave Peter his hand, yet with his hand he gave him a check : *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?* Though Christ likes believing, yet he dislikes doubting. A person may be truly believing, who nevertheless is sometimes doubting ; but his doubting eclipses the beauty of his believing.

34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. 35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought

unto him all that were diseased ; 36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment : and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

Observe, 1. Our Saviour's unwearied diligence in going about to do good : he no sooner landeth, but he goeth to Gennesaret, and healeth their sick. Observe, 2. The people's charity to their sick neighbours, in sending abroad to let all the country know that Christ the great Physician was come amongst them. Observe, 3. Where lay the healing virtue ; not in their finger, but in their faith ; or rather in Christ, whom their faith apprehended.

#### CHAP. XV.

**T**HEN came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders ? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with a great contest between our Saviour and the Pharisees about their traditions and old customs, which they valued more than the commandments of God : they accused the disciples for eating bread with unwashed hands, which though it were in itself but a decent custom, the Pharisees made it a religious rite ; for which reason our Saviour and his disciples would not observe it. Whence we learn, That what is in itself and may without offence be done as a civil custom, ought to be discountenanced and opposed when men require it of us as a religious act, or place religion in it. The Pharisees placed so much religion in washing their hands before meat, that they looked upon it as highly criminal to neglect it as to lie with a whore. One of them being in prison, and not having water enough to drink and to wash his hands too, chose rather to die with thirst than to transgress the tradition of the elders.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition ? 4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother : and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say

to his father or his mother, *It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me*; 6 And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Observe here, 1. The heavy charge which our Saviour brings in against the Pharisees; namely, for violating an express command of God, and preferring their own traditions before it: you make void *the commandments of God by your traditions*. Observe, 2. The command which our Saviour instances in, as violated by them; it is the fifth commandment, which requires children to relieve their parents in their necessity. Now though the Pharisees did not deny this in plain terms, yet they made an exception from it, which, if children had a mind, rendered it void and useless. For the Pharisees taught that in case any would give a gift to the temple, which gift they called *Corban*, and of which they themselves had a great share; that then children were discharged from making any farther provision for their poor, aged, or impotent parents; and might say unto them after this manner, *That which thou askest for thy supply, is given to God, and therefore I cannot relieve thee*. So that covetous and graceless children looked upon it as the most frugal way, once for all to fine to the temple, rather than pay the constant rent of daily relief to their poor parents. Learn, That no duty, gift, or offering to God is accepted, where the duty of charity is neglected. It is more acceptable to God, to refresh the bowels of his saints, who are the living temples of the Holy Ghost, than to adorn material temples with gold and silver.

7 *Ye hypocrites! well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,* 8 *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me.* 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

Our Saviour reproves the hypocritical Pharisees for these things: 1. That they preferred human traditions before the divine precepts. 2. That by their human traditions they made void the worship of God. It is God's undoubted prerogative to prescribe all the parts of his own worship; and

whosoever presumes to add thereunto, they worship him in vain. Our Saviour farther shows, that all this proceeded from the insincerity of their hearts: *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me*. Whence learn, 1. That the removing of the heart far from God in worship is a great sin, and an high degree of hypocrisy. 2. That whatever outward show and profession of religion men make, if their hearts be not right with God, and what they do proceed not from an inward principle of love and obedience to God, they are under the reign and power of hypocrisy: *Ye hypocrites, in vain do you worship me*. Learn, 3. That we must not be forward, from Christ's example, to pronounce men hypocrites; because we have neither that authority nor knowledge of the heart which Christ had, to authorize us so to do. Christ here called the Pharisees hypocrites; 1. Because they placed holiness and religion in ceremonies of human invention. 2. Because, being so superstitiously careful to avoid bodily pollutions, they left their hearts within full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Our blessed Saviour, leaving the Pharisees with some dislike, applies himself to the multitude, and shows them the true spring and original fountain of all spiritual pollution and uncleanness; namely, the filthiness and impurity of man's heart and nature; when boiling in the heart, the scum runs out at the mouth: whereby informing the multitude, that not that which is eaten, but that which is spoken, defiles a man: not the meat eaten with the mouth, but the wickedness of the heart vented by the mouth, pollutes a person in God's account.

12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13 But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead



the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Observe here, 1. How the disciples wonder that our Saviour did so little regard the displeasure of the Pharisees, *Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended?* Although nothing vexed the Pharisees more than the discovery of their false doctrine before the multitude, yet our Saviour did not stick to detect their errors, and to declare the truth, let the effects of their displeasure be what they would: sinful man-pleasing is fruitless and endless. Observe, 2. Our Lord's answer, which shows a double reason why he thus slighted the offence taken by the Pharisees. 1. He compares the Pharisees' doctrine and tradition to noisome weeds in the church, planted there not by God, but themselves; and consequently shall certainly be rooted up. In matters of religion, if men will act according to the dictates of their own fancies, and not walk by the rule of God's word, they may please themselves perhaps, but they can never please their Maker. Divine institution is the only sure rule of religious worship. 2. Christ compares the Pharisees themselves to blind guides. *They are blind leaders of the blind:* leaders and followers both blind, who will certainly and suddenly fall into the ditch of temporal and eternal destruction. Learn, 1. That ignorant, erroneous, and unfaithful ministers, are the heaviest judgments that can befall a people. 2. That the following of such teachers and blind guides will be no excuse to people another day, much less free them from the danger of eternal destruction.

15 Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16 And Jesus said, Are ye also without understanding? 17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

The disciples desiring the interpretation

of the foregoing parable, our Saviour gives it them; but withal expostulates with them, that they did not understand a thing so obvious and plain: *Are ye yet without understanding?* As if he had said, "Have ye sat thus long under my ministerial teaching, and enjoyed the benefit of my company and conversation, and yet are no farther proficient in knowledge?" Whence learn, That our Lord expects a proficiency in knowledge from us, answerable to the opportunities and means of knowledge enjoyed by us. Next he gives them the sense and signification of the parable; telling them, that it is out of a sinful heart that all sin proceeds: the heart is the cage or nest, which is full of these unclean birds, and from whence they take their flight. Though the occasions of sin are from without, yet the source and original of sin is from within. Learn, That the heart of man is the sink and seed-plot of all sin, and the fountain of all pollution; the life could not be so bad, if the heart were not worse: all the irregularity of our lives flows from the impurity of our hearts and natures.

21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

Observe here, The constant employment of our Saviour: *he went about doing good*, from place to place. In the borders of Tyre and Sidon he finds a faithful woman of the race of the Canaanites, who becomes an humble supplicant to Christ, while the Jews neglected so great salvation. Yea, she not only speaks, but cries unto him. Were we duly affected with our spiritual wants, we could speak to God in no other language than that of cries and tears; nothing but cries can pierce heaven. Observe, 2. Though all Israel could not example the faith of this Canaanite, yet was her daughter tormented with a devil. Learn, That neither truth nor strength of faith can secure us either against Satan's inward temptations, or outward vexations; and consequently, the worst of bodily afflictions are no sufficient proof of divine displeasure. Observe, 3. The daughter did not come to Christ for herself, but the mother for her. Perhaps the child was not sensible of its

own misery, but the good mother feels both the child's sorrow and her own. True goodness teaches us to appropriate the afflictions of others to ourselves; it causes us to bear their griefs, and to sympathize with them in their sorrows.

23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

Strange! that a miserable supplicant should cry and sue, whilst the God of mercy is speechless. What! is the fountain of mercy dried up? O Saviour! we have oft found cause to wonder at thy words, but never till now at thy silence. Learn hence, That Christ doth sometimes delay to return an answer to a well qualified prayer. Sometimes his people do not pray earnestly enough; sometimes they pray too earnestly for some outward and temporal mercy; sometimes the mercy they pray for is not good for them, or may be it is not yet good for them. Let us not then judge of God's hearing prayer by his present answer.

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Observe, When our Saviour doth answer, he gives not one word of comfort, but rather a repulse. Christ has often-times love in his heart to his people, when they can read none in his countenance, nor gather it from his discourse. Observe, The answer itself: Christ says not, *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Adam*, but, *to the lost sheep of Israel*. The Jews are compared unto *sheep*, the Gentiles unto *dogs*. Christ insinuates, that though she were a lost sheep of Adam, yet not being one of the lost sheep of Israel, he could do nothing for her. It was a common saying among the Jews, "That the nations of the world were likened to dogs, whereas they were God's sons and daughters."

25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me!

Yet hath not this poor woman done; Christ's former silence, and his present denial, cannot silence her. She comes, she worships, she cries, *Lord, help me*. O what an undaunted grace is the grace of faith! It has a strong heart, and a bold forenead; peremptory denials cannot

dismay it. This woman will not despond, though her prayer of faith, from the knees of humility, succeed not.

26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

Observe here, The seeming severity of Christ to this poor woman, he calls her not a woman, but a dog; and as it were spurns her from his feet with an harsh repulse. Did ever so severe a word drop from those mild lips? What shall we say? Is the Lamb of God turned a lion; that a woman in distress imploring pity, yea, a good woman, and an humble supplicant, should be thus rated out of Christ's presence for a dog? Learn hence, That Christ puts the strongest faith of his own children upon the severest trials; the trial had never been so sharp, if her faith had not been so strong. Usually, where God gives much grace, he tries grace much.

27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

Observe, How her humility grants all, her patience overcomes all; she meekly desires to possess the dog's place; not to crowd to the table, but to creep under it, and to partake of the crumbs of mercy that fall from thence. Indeed she showed one of the best qualities of a dog, in keeping her hold where she had once fastened, not letting go or giving over, until she had gotten what she desired. Learn hence, That nothing is so pleasing unto Christ, as to see his people following him with faith and importunity, when he seems to withdraw from them.

28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

The disciples observing her behaviour, might have been ready to say, O woman, great is thy patience, great is thy humility: but, says Christ, *Great is thy faith*: he sees the root, we the branches. Nothing but faith could thus temper the heart, thus strengthen the soul, thus charm the tongue. O powerful grace of faith, which Christ himself could no longer withstand, but cries out as a person overcome by the prevalency of it, *O woman, great is thy faith*. Note, That no grace ever goes away from Christ uncrowned; though we may wait long for a mercy, yet the hand of faith

never knocked in vain at the door of heaven. Mercy is as surely ours as if we had it, if we have but faith and patience to wait for it. This good woman found it so, to her unspeakable comfort; and the same shall we find, in the exercise of the same grace. *Quest.* But how doth this poor woman's faith appear to be great faith? *Ans.* Because having no promise to rely upon, and suffering so many repulses with seeming contempt, she still retained a good hope of Christ's kindness and mercy. Learn hence, 1. That the faith of those who, depending on God's goodness, do place an humble confidence in God, and are not by great temptations or discouragements removed from that their confidence; such faith is deservedly styled great faith. 2. That the faith of believing Gentiles was not only praiseworthy and well-pleasing to God, but more excellent and better pleasing than that of the Jews, to whom the promises did belong.

29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. 30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: 31 Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

Observe here, 1. The charity, 2. The faith of the multitude, in bringing the blind, the deaf, and the dumb, to Christ: their charity, in lending eyes to the blind, and a tongue to the dumb; who could neither come to Christ themselves, nor speak for themselves. Every man has a tongue to speak for himself, happy is he that has a tongue to pray and intercede for others; this charity did the people exercise here. Observe also, Their faith; they laid the lame and blind down at Jesus' feet relying upon his power, and believing his willingness to help and heal them. Observe farther, The effects of this miracle upon the multitude; it was two-fold: 1. They were struck with admiration and wonder, to see such cures wrought as exceeded the course of nature, and the power of art. 2.

*They glorified the God of Israel; that is, they acknowledged it to be a wonderful work of power and mercy wrought by that God whom Israel worshipped. Whence we learn, That the miraculous works of Christ, which he wrought before the multitude, were obvious to their senses; and did constrain the beholders (if not blinded with pharisaical obstinacy) to acknowledge the power of God communicated to Christ, and to praise him for it: The multitude marvelled, and glorified God.*

32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. 33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? 34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. 35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Here we have the second miracle of Christ's compassionate feeding the hungry multitude. Chapter xiv. we read of five thousand fed with five loaves and two fishes; here Christ feeds four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fishes. Where observe, That Christ fed fewest when he had most provision; when he had seven loaves he fed but four thousand; when he had five loaves he fed five thousand. Thus the wisdom and power of Christ is glorified by him as he pleases. The feeding of one thousand with one loaf, was as true a miracle as the feeding seven thousand. Our Saviour did put forth the power of his Godhead in working miracles, after what manner seemed best to his own wisdom. Observe farther, A double action performed by our Saviour: *He gave thanks; that is, he prayed for a blessing upon the food. Teaching us our duty, that if the Son of God did look up to heaven, and bless his food, we should not sit down*

to our food as a beast to his fodder, without craving a blessing upon it. The next action was, *He gave to his disciples*. But why did he distribute the loaves by the hands of his disciples? *Ans.* Because the disciples questioned, through the weakness of their faith, whether such a multitude as four thousand could be fed with so small a provision as seven loaves. Now our Saviour to convince them how easily he could do that thing which they had judged impossible, distributes the bread by them: making use of their own eyes and hands, for their conviction and satisfaction. Thus Christ, to shame the unbelief of his disciples, makes them not only spectators but actors in that work, which they judged to be impossible to be effected.

37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full. 38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. 39 And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

*They did all eat*, not a crumb or bit, but to fulness and satisfaction; yet seven baskets remain; answering the number of the loaves, as the twelve baskets in the former miracle answered the twelve apostles; in both, more is left than was at first set on: it is hard to say, which was the greater miracle, the miraculous eating or miraculous leaving. If we consider what they eat, we may justly wonder that they left any thing; if what they left, that they eat any thing. Observe, lastly, Christ would not have these fragments lost, but gathered up: the great Housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his orts. O how dreadful will the account of those be, who have large and plentiful estates to answer for as lost, being spent upon their lusts in riot and excess. *Dr. Fuller.*

#### CHAP. XVI.

**T**HE Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather*; for the sky is red: 3 And in the morning, *It will be foul weather* to-day; for the sky is red and

lowring. O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? 4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

Observe here, 1. The persons demanding of our Saviour a sign, the Pharisees and Sadducees, persons of contrary opinions and interests; yet both agree in tempting and opposing Christ. Learn thence, That wicked men how opposite soever they are to one another, yet can agree together in opposing Christ, and undermining his truth. Observe, 2. The sign demanded, *Shew us a sign from heaven*: as if they had said, Put us not off with such earthly signs as we have seen, in multiplying loaves; but let us see a miracle from heaven, such as Moses and Elias wrought. This they desired, not so much for their satisfaction, as out of curiosity, nay, wicked treachery. Learn thence, That to demand a sign, not to confirm our faith, but to harden ourselves in our unbelief, is a dangerous tempting of Christ. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's rejection of this demand of the Pharisees to give them a sign: *O ye hypocrites, says he, ye can discern the face of the sky, but ye cannot discern the signs of the times*. As if Christ had said, "Did not malice and obstinacy blind your eyes, ye might as easily see and discern that these are the times of the Messiah, and that I am he, by the miracles wrought by me, as you can make a judgment of the weather, by looking upon the sky." Learn, That to pretend more ignorance and uncertainty in discerning the signs of gospel times, than the signs of the weather, is great hypocrisy: *Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times!* Observe lastly, That our Saviour doth not condemn the study of nature, or making observation of the state of the weather from the face of the sky. All that our Saviour blamed was, that they were better skilled in the signs of the weather, than in the signs of the times. As God by natural signs gives us warning of a change in natural things; so by his providential dispensations he gives us warning of a change in civil things. He that is wise will observe these things; and by their observations will come to understand the pleasure of the Lord.

5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is because we have taken no bread.* 8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? 9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? 12 Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Observe here, 1. How dull the disciples of Christ were under Christ's own teaching, how apt to put a carnal sense upon his words; they apprehended he had spoken to them of the leaven of bread, what he intended of the leaven of the Pharisees' doctrine. Observe, 2. The smart and sharp reproof which Christ gave his disciples, for not understanding the sense and signification of what he spake. The Lord Jesus Christ is much displeased with his own people, when he discerns blindness and ignorance in them, after more than ordinary means of knowledge enjoyed by them: *How is it that ye do not yet understand?* Observe, 3. The metaphor which Christ sets forth the corrupt doctrine of the Pharisees by; he compares it to leaven partly for its sourness, and partly for its diffusiveness. Leaven is a piece of sour dough, that diffuses itself into the whole mass or lump of bread with which it is mixed. From whence our Saviour intimates, that the Pharisees were a sour and proud sort of people: and their doctrines like themselves, poisonous and pernicious in their consequences: the contagion of which our Lord warns his disciples to avoid and shun. Whence learn, That error is as damnable as vice; persons erroneous in their

judgments are to be avoided, as well as those that are lewd and wicked in their conversations. He that has a due care of his soul's salvation, must as well beware of erroneous principles as of debauched practices. Observe, 4. Our Saviour does not command his disciples to separate from communion with the Pharisees, and oblige them not to hear their doctrine; but only to beware of the errors that they mixed with their doctrine. We may and ought to hold communion with a church, though erroneous in doctrine, if not fundamentally erroneous. Separation from a church is not justifiable upon any other ground, than that which makes a separation between God and that church: which is either the apostasy of that church into gross idolatry, or in point of doctrine into damnable heresy, or imposing sinful terms of communion.

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's question, and the disciples' answer. Our Saviour's question is two-fold: 1. *Whom do men say that I am?* Not that the Son of God was ignorant what men said of him, but he had an intention more firmly to settle and establish his disciples in the belief of his being the promised Messias. And therefore, 2. He puts the question to them, *Whom do you, my disciples, say that I am?* "You, that have heard the holiness of my doctrine, and seen the divinity of my miracles; what say you to me: and what confession do you make of me." Christ expects greater measures of grace and knowledge, and higher degrees of affiance and faith, from those that have enjoyed the greatest means of grace and knowledge. The disciples were eye and ear witnesses of his doctrine and miracles, and accordingly he

expects from them a full confession of his divinity. Observe, 2. The answer returned, 1. By the apostles in general: *And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; some Jeremias.* It is no new thing, it seems, to find diversity of judgments and opinions concerning Christ and the affairs of his kingdom. We find that when our Saviour was amongst men, who daily both saw and heard him, yet there was then a diversity of opinions concerning him. 2. Peter, in the name of the rest, and as the mouth of all the apostles, makes a full and open confession of his being the Son of God: *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* Whence note, That the veil of Christ's human nature did not keep the eye of his disciples' faith from seeing him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of man; *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* Observe, 3. How highly pleased our Saviour was with this confession; he pronounces Peter, and the rest in him, *blessed*, who had by him made this christian confession: *Blessed art thou, Simon;* and tells him, 1. What did not enable him to make that confession, *Not flesh and blood:* that is, not man, nor the wisdom and reason of man. 2. But, positively, *God the Father*, by the operation of his Spirit, and the dispensation of the gospel, has wrought this divine faith in you, and drawn forth this glorious confession from you, that I am indeed the Son of God. Thence learn, That no man can savingly believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the world, but he in whom God himself by his holy Spirit has wrought such a persuasion by the ministry of the gospel.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Observe here, 1. As Peter confessed Christ, so Christ confesses him: Peter said, *Thou art Christ;* Christ says, *Thou art Peter*, alluding to his name, which signifies a *rock*; he having made good that title, by the strength, stability, and firmness of his faith. Observe, 2. A double promise made by Christ to Peter. 1. For the building: 2. For the upholding of his church. For the building of his church; 1. *Upon this rock will I build my church.* Upon what rock? "Upon Peter, the rock confessing," say the Papists: but if so, no more is said of Peter here, than of all the

apostles elsewhere, *Gal. ii. 9.* James and John are called pillars as well as Peter. So that Peter's superiority over the rest of the apostles can with no show of reason be from hence inferred. "Upon Christ the Rock confessed," say the Protestants; for Christ is the Foundation-Stone, upon which his church is built, *Ephes. ii. 20. Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-Stone.* So then, not upon Peter the rock confessing, but upon Christ the Rock confessed, and upon the rock of Peter's confession, that fundamental truth, That Christ is the Son of the living God, is the church built. *Upon this rock will I build my church; Super hanc confessionis tue Petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam.* Yet Christ may here be said to build his church upon Peter, because he used St. Peter's ministry in laying the foundation of a christian church among the Jews and Gentiles; he being the first preacher of that faith which he here confessed, first to the Jews, *Acts ii.* and then to the Gentiles, *Acts x.* And accordingly, St. Peter's conversion of three thousand souls by his ministry, *Acts ii. 41.* is looked upon by some as a punctual fulfilling of this promise here made unto him. He was styled the rock, because he laid the foundations of faith among the nations, that is, the first foundations of a christian church in the world. Whence it appears, that in this matter St. Peter neither had nor can have a successor; but if the Pope will pretend to be his successor in this affair, he must not sit at Rome, lording it there over God's heritage, but must go in person to the unbelieving Jews, and unconverted heathens, as Peter did; and labour by his preaching to bring over the Turk, the Jew, and the infidel, to christianity. Observe next, our Saviour's promise for the upholding, as well as the building, of his church: *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it;* that is, all the policy and power of the devil and his instruments shall neither destroy my church, nor extinguish the light of this divine truth, which thou hast now made confession of; namely, "That I am the true Messiah, the Son of the living God." Note, 1. That Jesus Christ is the Builder, and will be the Upholder, of his church. 2. That the church, upheld by Christ's power and promise, shall never be vanquished by the devil's policy or strength: *Upon this rock, &c. and the gates, &c.* By the gates of hell understand, 1. The

wisdom of hell ; gates being the seat of counsel. 2. The censures and sentence of hell, gates being the place of judicature. 3. By the gates of hell, understand the arms and power of hell, gates being a place of strength and guards. So that when Christ secures against hell, he secures against all that receive their commission from hell : neither hell, nor any envenomed by hell, shall prevail against my church.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Observe here, 1. The person to whom this promise is made, namely, to Peter, with the rest of the apostles : the confession being made by him in the name of the rest. Elsewhere we find the same authority and power given to them all, which is here committed unto Peter ; *John xx. 23. Whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted.* Although there might be a priority of order amongst the apostles, yet no superiority of power was founded in any one of them over and above the rest. Observe, 2. The power promised ; *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven* ; that is, the key of doctrine, and the key of discipline, or full power and authority to preach the gospel, to administer sacraments, and execute church-censures. The speech is metaphorical, and alludes to stewards and officers in great houses, to whose trust the keys of the household are committed. Christ's ministers are the stewards of his house, into whose hands the keys of his church are committed by Christ : the Pope would snatch them out of all hands, and keep them in his own ; he snatches at Peter's keys, but makes shipwreck of Peter's faith : arrogating Peter's power, but abrogating his holy profession. Learn, 1. That the authority and power which the ministers of the gospel do exercise and execute, is from Christ ! *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom.* 2. That this power of the keys Christ dispensed promiscuously to all his apostles, and never designed it as peculiarly for St. Peter. As they all made the same profession of faith by Peter, so they all received the same authority and power with Peter. And, accordingly, the apostles exercised their office independently of Peter, in converting those of the circumcision as well as

he. And St. Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, opened the kingdom of heaven to far more Gentiles than ever Peter did ; and therefore had this key of the kingdom of heaven given to him, as much as to St. Peter.

20 Then charged he his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

That is, till after his resurrection. It may seem strange that our Saviour should charge his disciples to tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ, seeing the knowledge of it was so necessary. The reason is conceived to be : 1. Because the glory of his godhead was not to be fully manifested till after his resurrection, and then to be published by himself, and confirmed by his own miracles. 2. Lest the knowledge of it should have hindered his death : for, *had the rulers known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* Learn, That Christ has his own fit times, and proper seasons, in which he reveals his own mysteries to the world. 3. That Christ was so intent upon his laying down his life for sinners, that he would not have his death hindered by an untimely declaration of his being truly and really God ; after his death it was that he declared himself to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.

21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Observe, 1. The wisdom of our Saviour, in acquainting his disciples with the near approach of his death and sufferings. This he did for several reasons : 1. To let them understand that he was really God, (as they had just before confessed him to be,) by his foreknowing and foretelling things to come. 1. To convince them of their error, in apprehending that his kingdom was of this world, and that he was to reign here as a temporal Prince. 3. To prevent their being offended at his sufferings, and to prepare them for their own ; that they might neither shrink at them, nor sink under them. Observe, 2. The persons foretold by Christ, that should be the bloody actors in the tragedy of his death : namely, the

ulers and chief priests : it was the poor that received Christ, and embraced the gospel ; it was the great ones of the world that rejected him, and set him at nought ; and the rulers both in church and state condemned and crucified him.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall not be unto thee.

No doubt Peter spake all this out of a sincere intention, and with a singular affection towards our Saviour ; but pious intentions and good affections will not justify unwarrantable actions. From this counsel of St. Peter to Christ, we learn, 1. How ready flesh and blood is to oppose all that tends to suffering : *Master, spare thyself.* 2. What need have we to be fortified against the temptations of friends as well as of enemies ; for Satan can make good men his instruments to do his work when they little think of it. Peter little suspected that Satan set him on work to hinder the redemption of mankind, by dissuading Christ from dying. But observe in the next verse with what indignation Christ rejects Peter's advice.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan : thou art an offence unto me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Christ looked upon Peter with anger and displeasure ; Christ heard Satan speaking in Peter. It was Peter's tongue, but Satan tuned it ; therefore Christ calls Peter by Satan's name ; they that will do the devil's work, shall have the devil's name too. He that would hinder the redemption of mankind, is Satan, an adversary to mankind. From our Saviour's smart reproof given to Peter, learn, That no love or respect to men's persons or piety must draw us to flatter them in their sins, or cause us to speak lightly of their sins. From our Saviour's resolution not to favour himself, notwithstanding Peter's advice, learn, That so intent was the heart of Christ upon the great work of man's redemption, that he could not bear the least word that should obstruct him in it, or divert him from it.

24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Observe here, 1. How our Saviour recommends his religion to every man's choice ; not attempting by force and violence to compel any to the profession of it. *If any man will come after me* : that is, if any man choose and resolve to be a christian. 2. Our Saviour's terms propounded ; 1. Self-denial, *Let him deny himself*. By which we are not to understand the denying and renouncing of our reason in matters of religion : but by self-denial is meant, that we should be willing to part with all our earthly comforts, and quit all our temporal enjoyments, for the sake of Christ and his holy religion. 2. Gospel-suffering, *He must take up his cross* : an allusion to a Roman custom, that the malefactor who was to be crucified, took his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution. Where note, Not the making of the cross for ourselves, but the patient bearing of it when God lays it upon our shoulder, is the duty enjoined : *Let him take up his cross.* 3. Gospel-service, *He must follow me* ; that is, obey my commands, and follow my example : he must set my life and doctrine continually before him, and must be daily correcting and reforming his life by that rule and pattern. See on *Luke ix. 23.*

25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it : and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Observe here, 1. That the love of this temporal life is a great temptation to men to deny Christ, and to renounce his holy religion. 2. That the surest way to attain eternal life, is cheerfully to lay down a mortal life, when the glory of Christ and his service calleth us thereunto.

26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?

Learn, 1. That God has intrusted every one of us with a soul of inestimable worth and preciousness, capable of being saved or lost, and that to all eternity. 2. That the gain of the whole world is not comparable with the loss of one precious soul. The soul's loss is an incomprehensible and irrecoverable loss.

27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels ; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.



There is two-fold judgment spoken of by this evangelist, St. Matthew, namely, a particular coming of Christ to execute vengeance on the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem; and a general coming at the day of judgment. If we understand this place of the latter, we have then. 1. The Judge described, *The Son of man*, he who was and is both God and Man, shall judge both angels and men. 2. The splendour of that day declared, *He shall come in glory with his holy angels*. The attendance of angels shall be required by Christ, not for necessity, but for majesty. 3. The work and business of that day demonstrated, and that is, *To render to every man according to his work*. Learn, That the judgment of the great day will be most glorious and righteous: Christ will be glorious in his person, and glorious in his attendants; and the judgment will be according to righteousness, without respect of persons, according to what has been done in the body.

28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

A threefold sense and interpretation is given of these words. 1. Some will have them refer to our Saviour's transfiguration, mentioned in the next chapter: as if he had said, "Some of you, as Peter, James, and John, shall shortly see me upon mount Tabor in such glory as I will come in to judgment." 2. Others understand the words of Christ's exercising his kingly power in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation; which St. John did live to see. 3. Others refer the words to the time of the gospel after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when the gospel was propagated and spread far and near, according to St. Mark ix. 1. *There are some standing here, that shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power*; that is, till they see the increase and enlargement of the church by the gospel. Thence note, That where the gospel is powerfully preached and cheerfully obeyed, there Christ cometh most gloriously in his kingdom.

#### CHAP. XVII.

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, 2 And was

transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

The former part of this chapter gives us an account of our Saviour's glorious transfiguration; he laid as it were the garments of frail humanity and mortality aside for a little time, and assuming to himself the robes of majesty and glory, the rays of his divinity darted forth; his face shined with a pleasing brightness, and his raiment with such a glorious lustre, as did at once both dazzle and delight the eyes of the beholders. Here observe, 1. The reasons of our Lord's transfiguration. 1. To demonstrate and testify the truth of his divinity, that he was Christ the Son of the living God: according to St. Peter's confession just before. This divine glory was an evidence of his divine nature. 2. Christ was thus transfigured, to prefigure the glory of his second coming to judgment, when he shall be admired of his saints, as here he was admired by his disciples. Observe, 2. The choice which our Saviour makes of the witnesses of his transfiguration, his three disciples, Peter, James, John. But why disciples? why three disciples? why these three? 1. This transfiguration was a type and shadow of the glory of heaven: Christ therefore vouchsafes the earnest and first-fruits of that glory only to saints; upon whom he intended to bestow the full harvest. 2. Three disciples were witnesses sufficient to testify this miracle. Judas was unworthy of this favour: yet lest he should murmur or be discontented at his being left out, others are also left out besides him. 3. These three, rather than others; because, 1. These disciples are more eminent for grace, zeal, and love to Christ; and, consequently, are most highly dignified and honoured by him. The most eminent manifestations of glory are made by God to those that are most eminent in grace. 2. These three were witnesses of Christ's agony and passion; to prepare them for which, they are here made witnesses of his transfiguration. This glorious vision from mount Tabor fitted them to abide the terrors of mount Calvary. Learn, That those whom God singles out for the greatest trials, he will fit beforehand with the best enablements.

3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him.

Observe here, The glorious attendants

upon our Saviour at his glorious transfiguration; they were two, two men; and these two men, Moses and Elias. This being but a glimpse of Christ's glory, not a full manifestation of it, only two of the glorified saints attend upon Christ at it: when he shall come in his full glory, ten thousand of thousands shall attend him. These two attendants were two men, not two angels; because men were more nearly concerned in what was done; they were not only spectators, but partners. Man's restoration was Christ's principal aim; the angels' confirmation his less principal design. But why Moses and Elias? 1. Moses the giver of the law, and Elias the chief of the prophets, attending both upon Christ, did show the consent of the law and the prophets with Christ, and their fulfilling and accomplishment in him. 2. Because these two were the most laborious servants of Christ, both adventured their lives in God's cause, and therefore are highly honoured by Christ. *Such as honour him, he will honour.*

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Observe here, 1. The person supplicating, Peter. No doubt the other two, James and John, were much affected, but Peter is more fervent and forward; yet there is no arguing, with the papists, from his fervency to his superiority; his personal prerogatives were not hereditary. Observe, 2. The Person supplicated, *Jesus*; not Moses, nor Elias: the disciples make no prayer, no suit to them, but to Christ only. Prayers to saints departed are both vain and unlawful. Observe, 3. The supplication itself, and that was, for their continuance where they were: *It is good for us to be here.* O what a ravishing comfort is the fellowship of the saints! but the presence of Christ among them renders their joys transporting. Observe, 4. Their proffer of service to further this continuance: *Let us make three tabernacles.* This motion was well meant and devout. St. Peter will stick at no cost nor pains for the enjoyment of Christ's presence and his saints' company; yet was the motion unadvised and rash. St. Peter erred in desiring a perpetuity of that condition which

was but transient and momentary. This vision was only a taste of glory, not a full repast. He errs, in that he would bring down heaven to earth, and take up with Tabor instead of heaven. He errs, in that he would enter upon the possession of heaven's glory without suffering, and without dying. Peter would be clothed upon, but was not willing to be unclothed. Learn, 1. That a glimpse of glory is enough to wrap a soul into ecstasy, and to make it out of love with worldly company. 2. That we are apt to desire more of heaven upon earth, than God will allow: we would fain have the heavenly glory come down to us, but we are unwilling to go by death to that: we know not what we say when we talk of felicity in tabernacles upon earth.

5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

Observe here, 1. A cloud was put before the disciples' eyes, for two reasons. 1. To allay the lustre and resplendency of that glory which they were swallowed up with. As we cannot look upon the sun in its full brightness, but under a cloud by reflection; so the glory of heaven is unsupportable, till God veils it, and shelters us from the surcharge of it. 2. A cloud overshadows them, to hinder their farther prying and looking into the glory. We must be content to behold God here through a cloud darkly; ere long we shall see him face to face. Observe, 2. The testimony given by God the Father out of the cloud concerning Jesus Christ his Son: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Here note, 1. The dignity of his person, he is a *Son*, therefore, for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, for duration co-eternal, with the Father; and a *beloved Son*, because of his likeness and conformity to him. A father's likeness is the cause of love; an union of wills causes a mutual endearing of affections. Note, 2. The excellency of his mediation, *In whom I am well pleased.* Christ in himself was most pleasing to God the Father, and in and through him he is well pleased with all believers. Christ's mediation for us makes God appeasable to us. Note, 3. The authority of his doctrine; *Hear him*: not Moses and Elias, who were servants, but

Christ my Son, whom I have commissioned to be the great Prophet and Teacher of my church : therefore adore him as my Son, believe in him as your Saviour, and hear him as your Lawgiver. He honours Christ most, that obeys him best. The obedient ear honours Christ more than either the gazing eye, the adoring knee, or the applauding tongue. *This is my beloved Son, hear him.*

6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. 7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. 8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. 9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Observe here, 1. The effect which this voice from heaven had upon the apostles, it cast them into a passion of horror and amazement. *They were sore afraid, and fell on their face.* Learn hence, That such is the majesty and glory of God, that man in his sinful state cannot bear so much as a glimpse of it, without great consternation and fear. How unable is man to hear the voice of God ! and yet how ready to despise the voice of man ! If God speaks by himself, his voice is too terrible ; if he speaks by his ministers, it is too contemptible. Observe, 2. The Person by whom the disciples were recovered out of these amazing fears into which they were cast ; namely, by Christ : *Jesus came and said, Be not afraid.* It is Christ alone who can raise and comfort those whom the terrors of the Almighty have dejected and cast down. Observe, 3. The manner how Christ recovered them out of this passionate amazement, it was threefold : 1. By his gracious approach : *He came unto them.* Christ will come with comfort unto his children, when they are disabled from coming to him for comfort. 2. By his comfortable touch : *He came and touched them.* Christ comforts believers by a real and close application of himself unto them. An unapplied Christ saves none, comforts none. 3. By his comforting voice : *He said, Be not afraid.* It is a word of assurance, that there is no ground nor cause of fear : and it is a word of assistance. It is *Verbum Operatorium* ; he that said

unto them, *Arise, be not afraid,* did by his Spirit breathe life and convey strength into their souls, to enable them to arise. Observe, 4. The strict injunction given by Christ to his disciples, not to publish or proclaim this vision till after his resurrection, for two reasons : 1. Lest it should hinder his passion ; for had the rulers of the world known him to be the Lord of life and glory, they would not have crucified him : therefore Christ purposely concealed his deity, to give way to his passion. 2. Christ being now in a state of humiliation, would have his majesty veiled, his glory concealed, and consequently forbids that the glorious vision of his transfiguration should be published, and accordingly charges his disciples, *that they tell the vision to no man till he was risen.* As if Christ had said, Tell no man the things which you have seen : not the residue of the disciples, they that be not troubled that they were not admitted to see with you ; nor those believers who now follow me, they that be not scandalized at my sufferings after so glorious a transfiguration.

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come ? 11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. 12 But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. 13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Here we have the disciples' question, and our Saviour's answer. They ask our Saviour, how the observation of the Jewish doctors holds good, that Elias must come before the Messiah come ? We see the Messiah, but we see no Elias. Our Saviour answers, That Elias was come already : not Elijah in person, but one in the spirit and power of Elias : one of his spirit and temper, to wit, John the Baptist, who was prophesied of under the name of Elias. And indeed great was the resemblance between the Elias of the Old Testament, and of the New, namely, John the Baptist : they were both born in bad times ; they were both zealous for God and religion ; they were both undaunted reprovers of the faults of princes ; and they were both

hated and implacably persecuted for the same. Learn, That hatred and persecution, even unto death, has often been the lot and portion of such as have had the zeal and courage to reprove the faults of princes : *Elias is come, and they did unto him whatsoever they would.*

14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son ; for he is lunatic, and sore vexed : for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. 16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

Observe here, 1. A sick patient brought to Christ, the great Physician, for cure and healing. A *lunatic*, that is, a person at certain times of the moon afflicted with the falling sickness. 2. This sickness of his was aggravated by Satan, who bodily possessed him, and cruelly cast him into the fire and into the water, but rather for torture than despatch. O how does Satan, that malicious tyrant, rejoice in doing hurt to mankind ! Lord, abate his power, since his malice will not be abated. Observe, 3. The person that brought him forth for cure ; his compassionate *father*, who kneeled down and cried out. Need will make a person both humble and eloquent. Every one has a tongue to speak for himself ; happy is he that keeps a tongue for others. 4. The physicians that he was brought unto ; first, to the *disciples*, and when they could not cure him, then to *Jesus*. We never apply ourselves importunately to the God of power, till we begin to despair of the creature's help.

17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation ! how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? Bring him hither to me.

These words are a severe rebuke given by Christ to his own disciples. Where observe, The persons upbraided, his disciples ; and the sin upbraided with, unbelief. O *faithless generation* ! Yet was it not the total want of faith, but the weakness and imperfection of faith, that they were upbraided with, and reprov'd for. Hence learn, 1. That secret unbelief may be hid and undiscerned in a person's heart, which neither others nor himself may take any notice of, until some trial

doth discover it. The disciples were not sensible of that unbelief which lay hid in them, till this occasion did discover it. Learn, 2. That the great obstacle and obstruction of all blessings, both spiritual and temporal, coming to us, is our unbelief : *O faithless generation* ! Others conceive that these words were not spoken to the disciples, but to the scribes, which St. Mark, chap. ix. says, at this time were disputing with Christ's disciples, and perhaps insulting over them, as having found out a distemper which could not be cured by Christ's name and power ; and these he called now, as he had done heretofore, *a generation of vipers.*

18 And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him : and the child was cured from that very hour.

Observe here, With what facility and ease our Saviour cured this poor man, who was bodily possessed by Satan : with one word speaking he delivered the distressed person from the malice and power of Satan. Thence learn, That how long soever, and how strong soever, Satan's possession has been in a person, Christ can eject and cast him out both easily and speedily.

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out ? 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief : for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place ; and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.

Observe here, How ashamed the disciples were of this open rebuke given them by their Master ; they privately ask him the cause of their ill success, why they could not cast out Satan, according to the power promised them to work miracles ? Our Saviour tells them, that their power to work this miracle now failed them, for a double reason. 1. For their unbelief ; by which we are to understand the weakness of their faith, not the total want of faith. 2. Because they neglected the special means appointed by God in order to that end ; to wit, *fasting and prayer* : that is, a servour of devotion, joined with faith and fasting. Thence learn, That fasting and prayer are

two especial means of Christ's appointment, for the enabling us victoriously to overcome Satan, and to cast him out of ourselves and others. We must set an edge upon our faith by prayer, and upon our prayer by fasting. *Quest.* But what are we to understand by faith as a grain of mustard-seed? *Ans.* 1. Some do thereby understand a faith that groweth and increaseth as a grain of mustard-seed, or a faith as strong and active in the heart as mustard-seed is on the palate. And by *removing mountains*, understand the performing things that are most difficult: as if Christ had said, Did your faith increase as a grain of mustard-seed grows, it would enable you to surmount all difficulties whatsoever. 2. Others, by faith as a grain of mustard-seed, understand the least degree of sincere faith on God, it being a proverbial speech among the Jews, used *pro re minima*, for the least thing; as if Christ had said, "Had you the least measure of that faith which casts out fear and doubting of success in the discharge of your office, you might perform things most difficult, and even this faith in its effects would be most mighty." *Dr. Whitby.*

22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men; 23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Observable it is, how frequently our Saviour forewarned his disciples of his approaching sufferings. All was little enough to arm them against the scandal of the cross, and to reconcile them to the thoughts of what he was to suffer for them, and they were to suffer with him. Learn, That we can never hear too much of the doctrine of the cross; nor can we too often be instructed in our duty to prepare for a suffering condition. As Christ went by his cross to his crown, from a state of abasement to a state of exaltation, so must all his disciples and followers likewise.

24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? 25 He saith, Yea. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest

thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? 26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. 27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

Observe here, 1. The question put to St. Peter: *Doth your Master pay tribute?* This tribute-money originally was a tax paid yearly by every Jew to the service of the temple, to the value of fifteen pence a head. But when the Jews were brought under the power of the Romans, this tribute-money was paid to the emperor, and was changed from an homage-penny to God, to a tribute-penny to the conqueror. The collectors of this tribute-money ask Peter, whether his Master would pay it or not? Observe, 2. The answer returned, positively and suddenly, *He does pay.* Peter consults not first with our Saviour, whether he would pay it; but knowing his readiness to render to all their due, he says, *Yes.* There was no truer Pay-Master of the king's dues, than he that was King of kings. He preached it, and he practised it: *Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.* Yet observe, 3. Our Saviour insinuates his own exemption, privilege, and freedom, from paying this tribute-money, as he was the Son of God, the universal King; subjects pay tribute, but kings' children are free. Though Christ was free from paying tribute by a natural right, yet he would not be free by a voluntary dispensation. Therefore observe, To prevent all scandal and offence, he works a miracle, rather than the tribute-money should go unpaid. Whether Christ by his almighty word created this piece of money in the mouth of the fish, (which was half a crown for himself and St. Peter, who had an house in Capernaum, and was there to pay his toll,) or whether Christ caused the fish to take up this piece of money at the bottom of the sea, is not necessary to inquire, nor possible to determine. Our duty is, 1. Reverentially to adore that omnipotent power, which could command the fish to be both his treasurer to keep his silver,

and his purveyor to bring it to him. 2. Industrious to imitate his example, in shunning all occasions of offence, especially towards those whom God has placed in sovereign authority over us. Observe, lastly, The poverty of our holy Lord, and his contempt of worldly wealth and riches : he had not so much as fifteen pence by him to pay his toll. Christ would not honour the world so far as to have any part of it in his own possession. The best man that ever lived in the world had not a penny in his purse, nor an house to hide his head in, which he could call his own.

CHAP. XVIII.

**A**T the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ?

Notwithstanding our blessed Saviour had so often told his disciples that his kingdom was not of this world, yet they still dreamt of a temporal and earthly kingdom, which he, as the Messias, should show forth the glory of ; in which there should be distinct places of honour and offices one above another ; and accordingly at this time, the ambition of the disciples led them to inquire of our Saviour, who should have the chief place of honour and dignity under him in that his kingdom ? who should be the principal officers of state ? concluding it must be some of them, though they could not agree who were fittest for those high posts of honour and service. Learn hence, That the best and holiest of men are too subject to pride and ambition, to court worldly dignity and greatness, to affect a precedence before, and a superiority above, others : the disciples themselves were tainted with the itch of ambition, which prompted them to inquire of their Master, who should be the greatest in his kingdom of the church.

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Our Saviour, intending to cure this pride and ambition in his disciples, first preaches to them the doctrine of humility ; and to enforce his doctrine, he sets before them a *little child*, the proper emblem of humility ; assuring them, that unless they be converted,

or turned from this sin of pride and ambition, and become as a little child in lowliness of mind and contempt of worldly greatness, they cannot be saved. Learn hence, 1. That no sins are more odious and abominable in the sight of God, than pride and ambition, especially amongst the ministers of the gospel. Learn, 2. That persons already converted do stand in need of further conversion : they that are converted from a state of sin, may want to be converted from a particular act of sin : this was the disciples' case here ; they were turned from a course of sin, but they wanted a conversion from a particular act of sin, to wit, from ambition. Learn, 3. That conversion, though sincere, may be very imperfect. Converts still have remains of corruption, some lust often breaking forth, which they must take special care to resist and subdue.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

As if our Lord had said, " That apostle, or that minister, who thinks as meanly of himself as a little child, and is humble and lowly in his own esteem, he deserves the highest place of dignity and honour in my church." Note, That the truly humble person, who is freest from affecting pre-eminency, is most worthy of the highest dignity and eminency in the church of God ; and, in the account of Christ, the way to be honourable is to be humble, " Before honour is humility."

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. 6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Our Saviour having declared that the humblest persons should be always highest in his esteem, he next declares how exceeding dear and precious such christians are to him, who resemble little children in humility of heart, and innocence of life : assuring the world, that whatever kindness and respect is showed to such for his sake, he reckons shown to himself ; and all the disrespect and unkindness which is offered to them, he accounts as done unto

himself; so near is the union, and so dear the relation, betwixt Christ and his members, that whatever good or evil is done unto them, he reckons as done unto himself.

7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Two things are here observable: 1. The necessity of scandalous offences: *It must needs be that offences come.* 2. The misery and mischief that comes by them: *Woe unto the world because of offences.* Woe unto such as give offences; this is, *Væ indignantis*, the woe of one denouncing: and woe to such as stumble at offence given; this is *Væ dolentis*, the woe of one lamenting. From the whole, note, 1. That scandals, or offensive actions in the church of Christ, will certainly fall out amongst those that profess religion and the name of Christ; *offences will come*: their necessity is partly from the malice of Satan, partly from the wickedness and deceitfulness of men's own hearts and natures, God permitting those to have their natural effects. 2. That scandalous and offensive actions from such as profess religion and the name of Christ, are baneful and fatal stumbling-blocks to wicked and worldly men. 3. That the offence which wicked men take at the falls of the professors of religion, to the hardening of themselves in their wicked practices, is matter of just and great lamentation: *Woe unto the world because of offences!*

8 Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. 9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.

This command of Christ is not to be understood literally, as if it were our duty to maim our bodily members; but the exhortation is, to cut off all occasions that may betray us into sin; and to mortify our darling and beloved lusts, though as dear to us as our right eye. Learn, 1. That sin may be avoided: it is our duty to avoid what

ever leads unto it, or may be the instrument or occasion of it. 2. That the best way to be kept from the outward acts of sin, is to mortify our inward affection and love to sin. If our love and affection to sin be mortified, our bodily members may be preserved, for they will no longer be weapons of sin, but instruments of holiness.

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Observe here, 1. A cautionary direction given by Christ to the men of the world concerning his members; *Take heed that you do not offend one of my little ones*, that is, that ye do not undervalue and neglect, much less injure and afflict them. 2. A reason assigned, *Because their angels being constantly and immediately in the presence of God*, are perpetually ready to execute his will, by revenging any wrongs and injuries done unto his friends and children. Learn, 1. What is the office and employment of the glorious angels; namely, to be the immediate attendants upon the royal person of the Supreme King and Sovereign of the world. Learn hence, 2. In what esteem good men are with God, and what a mighty regard he has for the meanest of his children, that he commits the care and preservation of them to the holy angels, who are nearest to him, and in highest favour and honour with him. It is St. Jerome's note upon this place, That great is the dignity of these little ones, seeing every one of them from his birth has an angel delegated to preserve him. But though others think that the opinion of a tutelary angel, or of one particular angel's having the custody of one particular saint, as his continual charge, has not a sufficient foundation in the holy Scriptures; yet all the angels in heaven are ministering spirits to them; and though they do not always attend upon their persons, (for they stand before the face of God,) yet it is to receive his commands, either to help them in their exigences, or punish those that injure them.

11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. 12 How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which

is gone astray? 13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. 14 Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Here our Saviour continues his argument against giving offence to his children and members; he came into the world to redeem and save them; therefore none ought to scandalize and offend them. And to illustrate this, he compares himself to a good shepherd, who regards every one of his sheep; and if any wander or go astray, he seeks to recover it with desire and joy. Learn, 1. That the natural condition of mankind is like to that of wandering sheep; they err and go astray from God, their chief Good, and the Object of their complete happiness. 2. That it was the work and business, the care and concern, of Jesus Christ, to seek and recover lost souls, as the shepherd doth his lost sheep. 3. That the love and care of Christ towards his sheep, in seeking to save and to preserve them, is a forcible argument unto all not to scandalize and offend them, much less to persecute and destroy them.

15 Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

In these words our Saviour gives us an excellent rule for the duty of fraternal correction, or brotherly admonition. Where note, 1. That brotherly reproof and admonition is a duty incumbent upon church-members. 2. That it may be administered successfully, it must be administered privately and prudently. 3. When private admonition prevails not, Christ has appointed church-governors to execute church-censures on the obstinate and irre-

claimable. 4. Persons justly falling under the censures of the church, and rightly excommunicate, are to be looked upon as contumacious and stubborn offenders, and the members of the church to shun society and conversation with them: *If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and as a publican was among the Jews*: wholly neglected, and not thought fit to be conversed with.

19 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

That is, whosoever the officers of my church shall justly excommunicate upon earth, shall, without repentance, be shut out of heaven; and whosoever upon their true repentance shall be absolved on earth, shall be absolved in heaven. Learn, That Christ will ratify in heaven whatsoever the church assembled doth in his name upon earth; whether to the censuring of the guilty, or the absolving of the penitent. This power of binding and loosing is by Christ committed to his church.

18 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Here we have a gracious promise made by Christ, of his presence with all his members in general, and with his ministers in special; whenever they meet *together in his name*, that is, by his authority, in obedience to his command, and with an eye to his glory. Whenever they celebrate any sacred institution of his, or execute any church-censures, he will be in the midst of them to quicken their prayers, to guide their counsels, to ratify their sentence, to accept their endeavours. Learn, 1. That Christ will be graciously present with and amongst his people, whenever they assemble and meet together in his name, be it never so small a number. 2. That Christ will in a special manner be present with the guides and officers of his church, to direct their censures, and to confirm the sentence passed in his name, and pro-



nounced by his authority, upon obstinate offenders.

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.

Here St. Peter puts a question to our Saviour, how often christians should forgive offences to their brethren professing repentance? Christ answers, that there should be no end of our mutual forgiving one another, but we are to multiply our pardon as our brother manifests his repentance. Not that we are hereby obliged to take the frequent offender into our bosom, and to make him our intimate; but to lay aside all malice, and all thoughts and desires of revenge, and to stand ready to do him any office of love and friendship. Learn, 1. That to fall often into the same offence against our brother, is a great aggravation of our offence. 2. That as the multiplication of sin is a great aggravation of sin, so the multiplication of forgiveness is a demonstration of a godlike temper in us. He that multiplies sin, doth, like Satan, sin abundantly; and he that multiplies pardon, doth, like God, pardon abundantly.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents: 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me

that thou owest. 29 And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Our blessed Saviour to enforce the foregoing doctrine of mutual forgiveness, propounds a parable; the main scope of which is to show, that unless we do actually forgive and pass by injuries done to us, we cut ourselves off from all interest in God's pardoning mercy, and must expect no forgiveness at the hands of God. From the whole, note, 1. That as we all stand in need of forgiveness from God, so likewise of forgiveness from one another. 2. That we all stand bound by the laws of our holy religion, to forbear and forgive one another. 3. That Almighty God has made the forgiving one another the certain and necessary condition of his forgiving us. 4. That such as are inexorable towards their brethren, shall find Almighty God hard to be entreated towards themselves. We may expect the same rigour and severity from God, which we show to men. 5. That the freeness of God's love in forgiving us, ought to be both an argument to excite us to forgive one another, and also a rule to direct us in the manner of forgiving each other. Doth God forgive us when he has power in his hand to punish us? So must we, when we have ability and opportunity for revenge. Doth God forgive universally all persons? So must we all provocations. Doth he

forgive freely and willingly, heartily and sincerely? So must we; we must be as forward in forgiving as they in provoking. Learn from the whole, The equity of unlimited forgiveness of our brother, because our God and Saviour forgives us more numerous and heinous sins than our brother is capable of committing against us. Let all unmerciful and unchristian creditors remember this text, who cast poor men into prison for debt, who have nothing to pay: surely he who bids us lend, *looking for nothing again*, will not allow us to imprison where nothing can be hoped for. It is to be feared, such will find but little mercy hereafter, who have showed no mercy here. For if at the great day such shall be condemned as did not visit christians in prison, what will their condemnation be, who cast them into prison?

## CHAP. XIX.

**A**ND it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan: 2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

The country of the Jews was divided into three provinces; namely Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. In Galilee, were the cities of Nazareth, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum; here Christ dwelt and spent a considerable part of his time, preaching to them, and working miracles among them. But now comes the time in which our holy Lord takes his leave of this province of Galilee, and returned no more to it; woe to that people, whose unthankfulness for Christ's presence and ministry among them causes him finally to forsake them. Having left Galilee, our holy Lord passes through Samaria, (the Samaritans being prejudiced against him, and refusing to receive him,) and comes into the coasts of Judea, where multitudes of people flocked after him. But observe the qualities of his followers, not the great ones of the world, not many mighty, not many noble; but the poor and despised multitude, the sick and weak, the deaf and blind, the diseased and distressed. Thence observe, That none but such as find their need of Christ, will seek after him, and come unto him. None apply to him for help, till they feel themselves helpless. *Great multitudes of the sick and diseased came unto him, and he healed them all.*

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

Observe here, 1. That whosoever our blessed Saviour went, the Pharisees followed him: not out of a sincere intention, but with a design to ensnare him; and accordingly, they propound a question to him concerning divorce, Whether a man might put away his wife on any occasion, as the manner of the Jews was? concluding that they should entrap him in his answer, whatever it was. If he denied the lawfulness of divorce, then they would charge him with contradicting Moses, who allowed it. If he affirmed it, then they would condemn him for contradicting his own doctrine, chap. v. 32. for favouring men's lusts, and for complying with the wicked custom of the Jews, who, upon every slight and frivolous occasion, put away their wives from them. Learn thence, 1. That whosoever our Lord went, as he had disciples and sincere followers, so the devil stirred him up bitter and malicious enemies, who sought to render his person unacceptable, and his doctrine unsuccessful. 2. That of all Christ's enemies, none had such a bitter hatred and enmity against his person, ministry, and miracles as the Pharisees: men of great knowledge, who rebelled against the light of their own consciences, and the clear convictions of their own mind. 3. That such was the wisdom of our Saviour in all his answers to his enemies, that neither their wit nor malice could lay hold upon any thing to ensnare him. But observe the piety and prudence of his answer to the Pharisees in the next words.

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning, made them male and female; 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Observe here, Christ gives no direct answer to the Pharisees' ensnaring question, but refers them to the first institution of

marriage, when God made them one, to the intent that matrimonial love might be both incommunicable and indissoluble. Whence learn, 1. The sacred institution of marriage: it is an ordinance of God's own appointment, as the ground and foundation of all sacred and civil society: *What God has joined together.* Learn, 2. The antiquity of this institution, it was from the beginning: *He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female.* Marriage is almost as old as the world, as old as nature: there was no sooner one person, but God divided him into two; and no sooner was there two, but he united them into one. Learn hence, 3. The intimacy and nearness of this endeared and endearing relation; the conjugal knot is tied so close, that the bonds of matrimonial love are stronger than those of nature: stricter is the tie betwixt husband and wife, than that betwixt parent and children, according to God's own institution, *For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife.*

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be for fornication*, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Observe here, The Pharisees' demand, and our Saviour's reply. They demand, *Why Moses commanded to put away the wife by a bill of divorce?* Where note, The wicked abuse which the Pharisees put upon Moses, as if he had commanded them, whereas he only permitted to put them away. *Moses suffered it for the hardness of their hearts*, that is, he did not punish it; not allowing it as good, but winking at it as a lesser evil; because the Jews were so barbarously cruel to their wives, as to turn them away upon every disgust. Now our Saviour in his reply refers them again to the primitive institution of marriage, bidding them compare the precept and their practice together; *for in*

*the beginning it was not so.* Learn, that according to the word and will of God, nothing can violate the bonds of marriage, and justify a divorce between man and wife, but the defiling of the marriage-bed by adultery and uncleanness: this is the only case in which man and wife may lawfully part. *Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, committeth adultery.*

10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of a man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.

That is, if a man be so strictly tied by marriage, it is best for him not to marry. A very rash saying of the disciples, discovering both their great carnality, and also the tyranny of a sinful practice grown up into custom. Learn, 1. That the best of men have their weaknesses and infirmities; and the flesh takes its turn to speak as well as the Spirit in them. All that the saints say is not gospel. Learn, 2. How impatient nature is of restraint, and how desirable of sinful liberty, and to be freed from the ties and bonds which the holy and wise laws of God put upon it.

11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. 12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

As if our Lord had said, "You, my disciples, do not consider what you say. All men without sinning against God cannot abstain from marriage, but those only to whom God has given the gift of continency, and grace of chastity. Some indeed by nature or natural impotency are unfit for marriage. Others wickedly are made unfit by castration; others by religious mortification bring under their bodies, that being free from the incumbences that attend a married state, they may give up themselves the better to the exercises of a holy life." Learn, 1. That Almighty God has given to divers persons different tempers and constitutions: some can subdue their impure desires and

affections without the remedy of marriage ; others cannot. 2. That continency, or an ability to live chastely, without the use of marriage, is the especial gift of God ; not common to all, but bestowed only upon some. A gift it is, worthy of our fervent prayers, worthy of our best endeavours. 3. That a vow of chastity is not in our power ; to quench a natural affection requires a supernatural gift. *All have not received* : that is, all men cannot live single, and abstain from matrimony. From whence it follows, that men and women are not by monastical vows to be obliged to live a single life, which some cannot perform without sin. Note farther, When Christ says, that some *have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake* : the meaning is, that some have abstained from matrimony that they might be more expedite in preaching the gospel, if ministers, or more prompt, fit, and ready to regard only the things of the Lord, if private christians.

13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray : and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me ; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15 And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence.

Observe here, A solemn action performed. Children are brought to Christ to be blest by him. Where note, 1. The persons brought, children, young children, suckling children, as the word imports : St. *Luke* xviii. 15. *They brought them in their arms*, not led them by the hand. 2. The person they are brought unto, Jesus Christ ; but for what end ? Not to baptize them, but to bless them : the parents looking upon Christ as a prophet, a great prophet, the great prophet, do bring their infants to him, that they may receive the benefit of his blessing and prayers. Whence learn, 1. That infants are subjects capable of benefit by Jesus Christ, 2. That it is the best office that parents can perform unto their children, to bring them unto Christ, that they may be made partakers of that benefit. 3. If infants be capable of benefit by Christ ; if capable of his blessing on earth, and presence in heaven, if they be subjects of his kingdom of grace, and heirs of his kingdom

of glory, then they may be baptized : for they that are in covenant have a right to the seal of the covenant. If Christ denies not infants the kingdom of heaven, which is the greater, what reason have his ministers to deny them baptism, which is the less ? But, say some, Christ did neither baptize them, nor command his disciples so to do ? *Answer*, That is not to be wondered at, if we consider that they had already entered into covenant with God by circumcision, and christian baptism was not yet instituted : John's baptism was the baptism of repentance, of which infants were incapable.

16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good things shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?

Observe here, A person addressing himself to Christ, and propounding an important question to him : namely, What he should do to gain eternal life ? Where note, 1. He believes the certainty of a future state. 2. He professes his desire of an eternal happiness in that state. And, 3. He declares his readiness to do some good thing, that he may obtain that happiness. Learn, That the light of nature or natural religion, directs and teaches men, that good works are necessary to salvation, or that some good things must be done by men that at death expect eternal life. *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?* It is not talking well, and professing well, but doing well, and living well, that entitles us to eternal life.

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good ? *there is none good but one, that is God* : but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

The person thus addressing himself unto Christ, was either a Pharisee, or a disciple of the Pharisees, who did not own Christ to be God, or to come from God ; but thought that eternal life was attainable, by fulfilling of the law in that imperfect sense which the Pharisees gave of it. And accordingly, 1. Christ reproves him for calling him good ? *Why callest thou me good ?* when thou wilt neither own me to be God, nor to come from God : *For there is none good*, that is, essentially and originally good, *but God only* ; nor any derivatively good, but he that receives his goodness from God also. From this place the

Socinians argue against the Divinity of Christ: thus, "He to whom the title of *good* doth not belong, cannot be God Most High. But by our Lord's words this title belongs not to him, but only to God the Father: therefore God the Father must be God alone." *Answer*, Christ may be supposed to speak to this young man thus: "Thou givest me a title which was never given to the most renowned rabbins, and which agrees to God alone: now thou oughtest to believe that there is something in me more than human, if thou conceivest that this title of *good* doth belong to me." Observe, 2. That our Saviour might convince him of the error of the Pharisees, who believed that they might without the knowledge of him, the true Messiah, enter into life, by keeping the law of God according to that lax and loose interpretation which they, the Pharisees, had given of it; he bids him *keep the commandments*. Where note, Christ calls him off from outward ceremonies, which the Pharisees abounded in, to the practice of moral duties; yet withal lets him understand, that if he expected salvation by the moral law, he must keep it perfectly and exactly, without the least deficiency, which is an impossibility to man in his lapsed state. Learn, 1. That such as seek justification and salvation by the works of the law only, must keep the whole law, or covenant of works, perfectly and exactly. Learn, 2. That the best way to prepare men for Jesus Christ, is to let them see their own impotency to keep and fulfil the covenant of works.

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness; 19 Honour thy father and *thy* mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Observe here, That the duties which our Saviour instances in, are the duties of the second table, which hypocrites are most failing in; for the sincere practice of our duty to our neighbour, is a signal evidence of our love to God. These duties of the second table the young man says he had kept from his youth, and perhaps might say it truly, according to the Pharisees' inter-

pretation, which condemned only the gross outward act, not the inward lust and motion of the heart. Learn hence, How apt men are to think well of themselves, and to have too high an opinion of their own goodness and righteousness before God: *All these have I kept from my youth up.*

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come *and* follow me.

That is, "Thou hast been all thy days a Pharisee; if now thou wilt be a christian, thou must maintain a readiness and disposition of mind to part with all that thou hast in this world, at my call and at my command, and follow after me." Learn, 1. That such as enter themselves disciples of Christ, must be ready, at Christ's call, to part with all for Christ's sake that they have in this world. 2. All that profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, must be his followers; that is, they must obey his doctrine, and imitate his example, his holiness, his humility, his heavenly-mindedness, his patience, his meekness, his readiness to forgive injuries, *and the same mind must be in us which was in Christ Jesus.*

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

This parting with all for Christ seemed so hard a condition to the young man, that he went away sorrowful from Christ. Whence learn, 1. That a man wedded to the world will renounce Christ rather than the world, when both stand in competition. 2. That unregenerate and carnal men are exceeding sorrowful, and sadly concerned, that they cannot have heaven upon their own terms, and win it in their own way. *The young man went away sorrowful.*

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Our blessed Saviour takes occasion from what had passed, to discourse with his disciples concerning the danger of riches, and the difficulties that attend rich men in their way to salvation. *A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of God.* Whence note, 1. That rich men do certainly meet with more difficulties in their

way to heaven, than other men : it is difficult to withdraw their affections from riches, to place their supreme love upon God in the midst of their abundance. It is difficult to depend upon God in a rich condition. *The poor committeth himself to God, but the rich man's wealth is his strong tower.* 2. That yet the fault lies not in riches, but in rich men ; who by placing their trust, and putting their confidence in riches, do render themselves incapable of the kingdom of God.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

These words were a proverbial speech among the Jews, to signify a thing of great difficulty, next to an impossibility : and they import thus much : " That it is not only a very great difficulty, but an impossibility, for such as abound in worldly wealth to be saved, without an extraordinary grace and assistance from God. It is hard for a rich man to become happy, even by God, because he thinks himself happy without God."

25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved ?

The disciples, understanding how naturally and strongly men love the world, and how idolatrously and inordinately their hearts run out upon it, they say unto Christ, *Lord, who then can be saved ?* Learn, 1. That when the general difficulties which lie in the way of salvation are laid forth and sufficiently understood, we may justly wonder that any are or shall be saved. 2. That such are the special and peculiar difficulties in the rich man's way to heaven, that his salvation is matter of wonder and great admiration to the disciples of Christ. *When the disciples heard this, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved ?*

26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible ; but with God all things are possible.

As if Christ had said, " Were all men left to themselves, no man either rich or poor would be saved ; but God can bring men to heaven by the mighty power of his grace ; he can make the rich in estate,

poor in spirit ; and them that are poor in this world, rich in grace." Learn, 1. That it is impossible for any man, rich or poor, by his own natural strength, to get to heaven. 2. That when we are discouraged with a sense of our own impotency, we should consider the power of God, and act our faith upon it : *With God all things are possible.*

27 Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee : what shall we have therefore ? 28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The apostles having heard our Saviour's command to the young man, to sell and give to the poor, St. Peter, in the name of the rest, tells Christ that they had left all, and followed him ; *Behold ! we have left all.* Where note, How Peter magnifies that little which he had left for Christ, and ushers it in with a note of observation and admiration also, *Behold ! we have forsaken all ; what shall we have then ?* Learn thence, That although it be a very little that we suffer for Christ, and less that we have to forsake upon his account, yet we are apt to magnify and extol it, as if it were some great matter. *Lord, we have forsaken all.* What all ? His tattered fisher-boat and his ragged nets ; scarce worthy to be mentioned : yet how is it magnified ! *Behold, Lord, we have left all !* But observe our Lord's kind and gracious answer ; " You that have left all to follow me, shall be no losers by me : for in the regeneration, that is, at the resurrection, when believers shall be perfectly renewed, both in soul and body, and shall enjoy my kingdom, then, as I sit upon the throne of my glory, so shall you sit with me in a higher degree of dignity and honour, *judging the twelve tribes of Israel ;* that is, the Jews first, for their unbelief, and then all other despisers of gospel grace and mercy." Learn, 1. That such ministers as do most service for Christ and forsake most to follow him, shall in his kingdom partake of most honour and dignity with him and from him. 2. That as the ministers of Christ in general, so his twelve apostles in

particular, shall sit nearer the throne of Christ, and have an higher place in glory at the great day, than ordinary believers.

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

The foregoing promise, ver. 28, respected the apostles; this, all christians who forsake their dearest enjoyments for Christ; he assures them, they shall be recompensed in this life an hundred-fold. How? *Non formaliter, sed. eminenter: not in specie, but in valore*; not in kind, but in equivalence; not an hundred brethren, or sisters, or lands; but, First, He shall have that in God, which all creatures would not be to him, if they were multiplied an hundred times. Secondly, The gifts and graces, the comforts and consolations, of the Holy Spirit, shall be an hundred-fold better portion than any thing we can part with for the sake of Christ and his gospel here. Though we may be losers for Christ, yet shall we never be losers *by* him. Christ gives present recompenses as well as future rewards; insomuch, that they who have suffered and lost most for Christ, have never complained of their sufferings or losses. Therefore never be afraid to lose any thing for Christ, he will not only see you indemnified, but plentifully rewarded; in this world an hundred-fold, in that to come eternal life.

30 But many *that are first* shall be last; and the last *shall be first*.

A two-fold sense and interpretation is given of these words: the first respects the Jews and Gentiles in general: the second all professors of christianity in particular.

• The Jews (as if Christ had said) look upon themselves as first, and nearest to the kingdom of heaven, but for their infidelity they shall be last in it; that is, never shall come there. And the Gentiles, who were looked upon as dogs, and farthest from heaven, shall be first there, upon their conversation to me, and faith in me." As the words respect all professors, the sense is, "Many that are first in their own esteem, and in the opinion of others, and forward in a profession of religion, yet at the day of judgment they will be last and least in mine and my Father's estimation and account. And many that were little

in their own, and less in the esteem of others, who had a less name and vogue in the world, shall yet be first and highest in my favour." Learn hence, That the day of judgment will frustrate a great many persons' expectations, both as touching others, and concerning themselves. Many will miss of heaven, and be last, who looked upon themselves to be first. And many will find others in heaven, whom they least expected there. *The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth.* We judge of man by outward appearances, but we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth. He can neither be deceived, nor yet deceive.

#### CHAP. XX.

**F**OR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, 4 And said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that shall ye receive.*

A two-fold sense and interpretation is given of this parable: but both analogical. One of which relates to the calling of the Gentiles. The Jews were the first people that God had in the world; they were hired into the vineyard betimes in the morning, the Gentiles not till the day was far spent: yet shall the Gentiles, by the favour and bounty of God, receive the same reward of eternal life which was promised to the Jews, who bare the heat of the day while the Gentiles stood idle. In the other analogical sense we may understand all persons indefinitely called by the gospel into the

visible church; those that are called last, shall be rewarded together with the first; and accordingly the design and scope of this parable is, to show the freeness of divine grace in the distribution of those rewards which the hand of mercy confers upon God's faithful servants. The *vineyard* is the church of God, the *husbandman* is God himself: the *labourers* are particular persons. God's going at divers times into his vineyard, imports the several ages of man's life; some are called early in the morning, some at noon, others at night. Now when God comes to dispense his rewards, those that entered first into the vineyard, and did most service for God, shall be plentifully rewarded by him; and such as came in later, but did faithful service, shall not miss of a merciful reward. Learn, 1. That so long as a person keeps out of Christ's vineyard and service, he is *idle*. Every unregenerate man is an idle man. 2. That persons are called by the preaching of the gospel at several ages and periods of life into God's vineyard; that is, into the communion of the visible church. 3. That such as do come in, though late, into God's vineyard, and work diligently and faithfully, shall not miss of a reward of grace at the hand of free mercy.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their hire*, beginning from the last unto the first. 3 And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the good man of the house, 12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14 Take *that* thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with

mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Here observe, 1. That the time of God's full rewarding of his labourers, is the evening of their days; that is, when their work is done. *When the evening was come, the Lord of the vineyard called his labourers, and gave them their hire*; not but that they have part of their reward in hand, but it is chiefly laid up in hope. Observe, 2. That though God makes no difference in his servants' wages for the time of their work, yet he will make a difference for the degrees of their service. Undoubtedly they that have done most work, shall receive most wages. *He that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully; God will reward every man according to his works*; that is, not only according to the nature and quality, but the measure and degree, of his works. All shall have equity, but all shall not have equal bounty. Observe, 3. That all inequality in the distribution of rewards, doth not make God an unjust Acceptor of persons; he may dispense both grace and glory in what measure and degree he pleases, without the least shadow of unrighteousness. *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* Observe, 4. That when we have done much service for God, by labouring longer than others in his vineyard, it is our duty to have a low esteem both of our services and of ourselves, *for the first shall be last, and the last first*; that is, they that are first and highest in their own esteem, shall be the last and least in God's account.

17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, 19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

This is now the third time that Christ had acquainted his disciples very lately with his approaching sufferings, and bloody passion. He did it twice before, chapter xvi. and chapter xvii. yet now he mentions it again, that they might not be dismayed,



and their faith might not be shaken to see him die, who called himself the true Messiah and the Son of God. The first time he told his disciples of his death in general; the second time he declares the means, by treason; now he tells them the manner, by crucifying: that he should be scourged, mocked, spit upon, and crucified: all this he did, to prevent his disciples' dejection at his sufferings. Learn thence, That it is highly necessary that the doctrine of the cross be often preached to us; that so being armed with the expectation of sufferings before they come, we may be the less dismayed and disheartened when they come. Our Lord's frequent forewarning his disciples of his death and sufferings was to fore-arm them with expectation of *his* sufferings, and with preparation for their *own*.

20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. 21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

To sit on the right hand and on the left, is to have the most eminent places of dignity and honour after Christ. This the mother might be encouraged to ask for James and John, because of their alliance to Christ, and because Christ had admitted them with Peter to be with him at his transfiguration. However, the rest of the disciples hearing of this ambitious request of the two brethren, and being as desirous, and in their own opinion as deserving, of the same honour, they had indignation against them. Whence note, That none of the disciples did imagine that Christ had promised the supremacy to Peter, by these words, *Tu es Petrus*, thou art Peter; for then neither James nor John had desired it, nor would the rest have contended for it. Observe here, 1. The persons making this request to Christ, *Zebedee's* children; that is, James and John, by the mouth of their mother. They speak by her lips, and made use of her tongue, to usher in a request which they were ashamed to make themselves. Observe, 2. The request itself, *Grant that these two may sit, the one on thy right hand, the other on thy left hand*. Where note, How these

disciples did still dream of Christ's temporal kingdom, (although he had so often told them, *that his kingdom was not of this world*;) and ambitiously seek to have the preference and pre-eminence in that kingdom. See here how these poor fishermen had already learnt craftily to fish for preferment. Who can wonder to see some sparks of ambition and worldly desires in the holiest ministers of Christ, when the apostles themselves were not free from aspiring thoughts, even when they lay in the bosom of their Saviour? Ambition has all along infected churchmen, and troubled the church, even from the very first original and foundation of it. Observe, 3. Both the unseasonableness and unreasonableness of this request made by the disciples. Christ speaks of his sufferings to them, and they sue for dignity and great places from him, in *optimis non nihil est pessimi*: the holiest, the wisest, and best of men, in their imperfect state, are not wholly free from passionate infirmities. Who would have expected, that when our Saviour had been preaching the doctrine of the cross to his disciples, telling them that he must be mocked, scourged, spit upon, and crucified for them, that they should be seeking and suing to him for secular dignity and honour, pre-eminence and power! But we plainly see, the best of men are but men, and that none are in a state of perfection on this side heaven.

22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

As if Christ had said, "You do but abuse yourselves with fond and idle dreams; there is other work cut out for you in the purpose of God, than sitting upon thrones and tribunals: to think of suffering would do you more service." And accordingly our Saviour in his answer tells these disciples, 1. That they were greatly ignorant of the nature and quality of his kingdom, which was not secular, but heavenly; but the carnal notion of a glorious earthly kingdom upon earth, in which they should be delivered from the Roman power, was so deeply imprinted in their minds, that they frequently declared their expectation of it, notwithstanding all the assurances which Christ had

given them of the contrary. Observe, 2. The course which our Saviour takes to cool the ambition of his disciples ; he tells them, they must expect here, not crowns on their heads, but a cross on their backs ; they must first taste of his sufferings, before they talk of his glory ; and patiently suffer for him, before they expect to reign with him ; plainly intimating, that the cross is the way to the crown, suffering the way to reigning, and that those that suffer most for Christ, shall partake of highest dignity and glory from him. Observe, 3. The presumptuous confidence which the disciples had of their own strength and ability for sufferings.

*Are ye able, says Christ, to drink of my cup ?* They reply, *We are able.* Alas, poor disciples ! when it came to the trial, they all cowardly forsook him and fled. A bold presumption makes us vaunt of our own ability ; holy jealousy makes us distrustful of our own strength. Those that are least acquainted with the cross, are usually the most confident undertakers.

23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father.

Observe here, Our blessed Saviour's wonderful mildness and gentleness towards his disciples ; he doth not with passion, much less with indignation, reprehend them, either for their ambition or presumption, but makes the best of their answer, and encourages their good intentions ; he tells them, that they should have the honour to share with him in his sufferings, to pledge him in his own cup, and after a conformity to him in his sufferings, they might expect to be sharers with him in his glory. Yet observe, that when Christ says, *that to sit at his right hand was not his to give* ; he means, as he was Man, or as he was Mediator : for elsewhere, as God, we find him asserting his power to dispose of the kingdom of heaven : John x.

28. *I give unto them eternal life.* However the Arians of old, and Socinians of late, do from this text infer, that God the Father has a power reserved to himself, which he hath not committed to Christ his Son ; from whence they would conclude, that he is not the same God which the Father is, because he hath not the same power which the Father has. *Answer,*

But if Christ be here supposed to deny this power to himself, he must then manifestly contradict himself, when he says, *I appoint unto you a kingdom, and All power in heaven and earth is given to me.* When Christ therefore saith, he could only give this to them for whom it was appointed of his Father ; this doth not signify any defect in his power, but a perfect conformity to his Father's will, and that he could not do this unless the divine essence and nature abided in him. This the words rather show, than that there is any want of power in Christ.

24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. 25 But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 26 But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ; 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

Note here, 1. That Christ by these words doth not forbid the exercise of civil dominion and lawful magistracy ; for then all order, all defence of good men, and punishment of evil-doers, would be taken away. Magistracy is God's ordinance, and the magistrate is God's minister for the good of human society, and consequently not here censured or condemned by Christ. True, when Christ was here on earth, he refused to execute the magistrate's office, because his kingdom was not of this world, and because he would give no umbrage to Cæsar or the Jews : and because he would leave us an example of humility and contempt of worldly grandeur, and not because the office of civil magistracy was unlawful. Note, 2. That Christ by this text doth not condemn the exercise of ecclesiastical government, that being as necessary in the church as the former in the state. The welfare of the church necessarily depends on the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline. Note, 3. Christ here forbids only the exercise of that dominion which is attended with tyranny and oppression ; and is managed according to men's wills and lusts : now, says Christ, you shall have no such government, you shall command nothing for mere will and pleasure, but your whole

office shall consist in being ministers to the good of others; and herein ye shall resemble *me the Son of man, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.* And accordingly, that Christ might effectually quench those unhappy sparks of ambition which were kindled in his apostles' minds, he tells them, that supremacy and dominion belong to secular princes, not to evangelical pastors, who ought to carry themselves with humility towards one another; not that Christ directs to a parity and equality amongst all his ministers, and forbids the pre-eminence of some over others; but the affectation of superiority, and the love of pre-eminency, is that which our Saviour disallows. Learn, 1. That so far ought the ministers of Christ to be from affecting a domination and superiority of power over their fellow-brethren, that, in imitation of Christ their Lord and Master, they ought to account themselves fellow-servants; *I am amongst you, saith Christ, as one that serveth.* 2. That such ministers as do love and affect pre-eminency and superiority are most unfit for it; and they deserve it best, who seek it least. 3. That the dignity and honour which the ministers of Christ should chiefly and only affect, is in another world; and the way to be greatest and highest there, is to be low and humble here, mean in our own eyes, and little in our own esteem. *Whosoever will be chief, says Christ, let him be your servant.*

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

To encourage his disciples to the forementioned condescending humility one towards another, our Saviour propounds to them his own instructive example; *I came not to be ministered unto, says Christ, but to minister* to the wants and necessities of others, both for soul and body. "O what a sight will it be, (as if our Lord had said,) to behold an humble God, and a proud creature; an humble Saviour, and an haughty sinner!" Yea, our Lord urges his example farther, that as he laid down his life for us, so should we be ready to lay down our lives for one another. Did Christ lay down his life for us, and shall we not lay down a lust for him? our pride, our ambition, our affectation of dignity and superiority over others? Note here two things, 1. Whereas it is said, that

Christ gave his life a ransom for many; it is elsewhere affirmed, that he tasted death for every man, even for them that *denied the Lord who bought them.* The word *many*, in other places of Scripture, is not exclusive of some, but inclusive of all. Thus *Dan. vii. 2. Many that sleep in the dust shall arise*; answers *St. John v. 28, 29. All that sleep in their graves shall hear his voice.* Thus *Rom. v. 15. Through the offence of one many died*; answers *1 Cor. xv. 22. In Adam all died.* There is a virtual sufficiency in the death of Christ for the salvation of mankind, and an actual efficacy for the salvation of them that repent, and believe, and obey the gospel. Note, 2. From these words, *He gave his life a ransom*; that Christ suffered in our stead, and died in our place, and gave his life instead of ours. It was the constant opinion both of the Jews and Gentiles, that their piacular victims were ransoms for the life of the offender, and that he who gave his life for another, suffered in his stead, to preserve him from death. And who can reasonably suppose, but that our Lord intended by saying, he gave himself a Ransom, that he gave his life instead of the lives of those for whom he suffered? Vain are the Socinians, when they say this price was to be paid to Satan, because he detained us captive. True; the price is to be paid to him that detains the captive, when he doth this for gain to make money of him, as the Turks detain the christians captive at Algiers; but when a man is detained in custody for violation of a law, then it is not the gaoler, but the legislator, to whom the price of redemption must be paid, or satisfaction be made. Accordingly this price was paid to God; for Christ became our Ransom, as he offered up his life and blood for us; now he offered himself without spot to God, *Heb. ix. 14.* he therefore paid the price of our redemption to God.

29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. 30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* son of David. 31 And the multitude rebuked them because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy upon us, O Lord,

*thou son of David !* 32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you ? 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34 So Jesus had compassion on *them*, and touched their eyes : and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

This chapter concludes with a famous miracle, wrought by Christ upon two blind men in the sight of a great multitude which followed him. Where observe, 1. The blind men's faith in acknowledging Jesus to be the true Messiah, for so much the title of the *Son of David* signifies. Observe, 2. Their fervency, in crying so earnestly to Christ for mercy and healing ; *Have mercy upon us, thou Son of David.* A true sense of want will make us cry unto Christ for help earnestly, and with undeniable importunity. Observe, 3. The great condescension of Christ towards these poor blind men : *He stood still, he called them, he had compassion on them, he touched their eyes, and healed them.* A mighty instance of Christ's divine power. He that can open blind eyes with a touch of his finger, and that by his own power, is really God ; his touch is an omnipotent touch. Observe, 4. Although Christ well knew the condition of these blind men, yet before he will restore them to sight, they must sensibly complain of the want of sight, and cry unto him for mercy and healing. Learn hence, That although Christ perfectly knows all our wants, yet he takes no notice of them till we make them known to him by prayer. Observe, 5. The best way and course which the blind men take to express their thankfulness to Christ for recovered sight : *they followed him.* Learn thence, That mercy from Christ is then rightly improved, when it engages us to follow Christ. This should be the effect of all salvation wrought for us. He praiseth God best, that serveth and obeyeth him most ; the life of thankfulness consists in the thankfulness of the life.

## CHAP. XXI.

**AND** when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, 2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and

straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her : loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me. 3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them ; and straightway he will send them.

The former part of this chapter gives us an account of our Saviour's solemn and triumphant riding into the city of Jerusalem. Where observe, That in all our Saviour's journeys and travels from place to place, he constantly went, like a poor man, on foot, without noise, and without train ; now he goes up to Jerusalem to die for sinners, he rides, to show his great cheerfulness in that service, and his forwardness to lay down his life for us. But what doth he ride upon ? *An ass*, according to the manner of great persons among the Jews ; but especially to fulfil the prophecy, *Zech. ix. 9.* that the Messiah, a king of the Jews, should *come riding upon an ass.* But this *ass* was a colt, the foal of an ass, on which never man had rode before, says St Mark, chap. xi. 12. signifying thereby, that the most unruly and untamed creatures become obedient and obsequious to him ; and upon a *borrowed ass*, the use of which he demands, thereby manifesting his sovereign right to all the creatures ; and accordingly he bids his disciples tell the owner of the ass, that *the Lord had need of him* : not our Lord, but *the Lord*, that is, he that is the Lord of all, *whose are the cattle upon a thousand hills* ; he that is Lord of all the beasts, and the owners too. Observe farther, That notwithstanding Christ's supreme right to the ass and the colt, he will have neither of them taken without the owner's knowledge, or against his will ; but the disciples must acquaint him with it, and by a double argument move him to it. 1. Christ's right or dominion and sovereignty over them ; he is *the Lord* that sends for them. 2. His present occasion for them ; the Lord has *need of them*. Note also here a wonderful instance of Christ's prescience or foreknowledge, even in the most minute and smallest matters. 1. *You shall find a colt.* 2. *On which no man ever sat.* 3. *A colt tied and bound with its dam.* 4. *In the place where two ways met.* 5. *As they entered the village.* 6. *That the owner should be willing to let him go.* Such an exact knowledge had Christ of

persons and actions, even of the circumstances of actions.

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Here the reason is assigned why Christ rode upon the ass into Jerusalem; it was to fulfil an ancient prophecy, that the *Messias*, or king of the Jews, should come riding upon that beast into Jerusalem. There was not any prophecy of Christ more plainly fulfilled than this. The prophecy alluded to, is *Zech. ix. 9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* Where note, The character given of the *Messias*; he is the supreme King and Governor of his church, *thy King cometh.* The errand that he comes upon, *bringing salvation*: and the entertainment which his church was to give him; namely, to receive him with triumphs of joy, and universal acclamations. *Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; and shout, O Jerusalem, for joy.*

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, 7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. 8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. 9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!

Observe here, 1. The obedience of his disciples, and the motions of the multitude; the disciples never dispute their Lord's commands, nor raise objections, nor are afraid of dangers, but speedily execute their Lord's pleasure, and find every thing according to their Lord's predictions. When our call is clear, our obedience must be speedy. What God commands, we are

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10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? 11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

This is not the first or only time that Jerusalem was moved and troubled at the appearance of Christ; at his birth, *Matt. ii.* we read, *all Jerusalem was troubled,* together with Herod; and now that he rides into Jerusalem, though in so mean a port, yet there is a new commotion. Jerusalem, instead of being thankful for his company, is troubled at his presence. Thence learn, That such persons and places as have the greatest helps and privileges afforded to them, are not always the most answerable in their returns of thankfulness. It is not Christ's presence with us, but his welcome to us, that makes us happy. Christ is daily taught in our synagogues, and preached in our streets; yet, alas! multitudes are ignorant of him, and say with the men of Jerusalem, when Christ was before their eyes, *Who is this?*

12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 13 And said unto them, It is written, My house

shall be called the house of prayer ; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Our blessed Saviour having entered Jerusalem, observe, his first walk was not to the palace, but to the temple, and his work there was to purge and reform : all reformation of manners must begin first at the house of God. Our Lord's business was to reform the temple, not to ruin it. Places dedicated to the service of God, if profaned and polluted, ought to be purged from their abuses, not pulled down and destroyed, because they have been abused. But what was the profanation of the temple, which so offended our Saviour ? *Answer*, Within the third or outward court of the temple, there was a public mart or market held, where were sold oxen, sheep, and doves, and such things as were needful for sacrifice ; many of the Jews coming an hundred miles to the temple, it was burdensome to bring their sacrifices so far with them ; wherefore order was taken by the priests, that sheep and oxen, meal and oil, and all other requisites for sacrifice, should be had for money close by the altar, to the great ease of the offerer. Nothing could be more plausible than this plea. But the fairest pretences cannot bear out a sin with God ; therefore our blessed Saviour, in indignation at so foul an abuse, whips out these chapmen, casts down their tables, and vindicates the honour and reputation of his Father's house. Learn thence, That there is a reverence due to God's house for the Owner's sake, and for the service sake. Nothing but holiness can become that place, where God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness. Observe lastly, The reason which our Saviour gives for this act of his ; for, says he, *It is written, My house shall be called an house of prayer.* Where by *prayer* is to be understood the whole worship and service of Almighty God, of which prayer is an eminent and principal part. That which gives denomination to an house, is certainly the chief work being done in that house. Now God's house being called an house of prayer, certainly implies that prayer is the chief and principal work to be performed in his house ; yet must we take heed that we set not the ordinances of God at variance one with another ; we must not idolize one ordinance, and vilify another ; but pay an awful respect and regard to all the institutions of our Maker.

14 And the blind and the lame

came to him in the temple ; and he healed them. 15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David ! they were sore displeased, 16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say ? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea : have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise ?

Observe here, 1. That our blessed Saviour works his miracles, not secretly in a corner, but openly in a temple, and submits them to the examination of all persons' senses. A miracle is a supernatural action which is obvious to sense. Popish miracles are talked of by many, but seen by none. Observe, 2. That Christ's enemies are never more incensed, than when his divine power is most exerted, and his divine nature owned and acknowledged. *When the chief priests saw the miracles which Jesus did, and heard the children crying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased.* Observe, 3. That Christ can glorify himself by the mouth of babes and sucklings ; he can form and fit up what instruments he pleases to show forth his excellences and celebrate his praises. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.*

17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany ; and he lodged there. 18 Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hungered. 19 And when he saw a fig-tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig-tree withered away.

Our blessed Saviour having driven the buyers and sellers out of the temple, lodges not that night in Jerusalem, but withdraws to Bethany, a place of retirement from the noise and tumult of the city. Where note, Our Lord's love of solitude and retiredness. How delightful is it to a good man, to dwell sometimes within himself, to take the wings of a dove, and fly away, and be at rest ! Yet the next morning our Lord returns to the city : he knew when to be

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solitary, and when to be sociable; when to be alone, and when to converse in company. In his passage to the city, he espied a fig-tree; and being *an hungred* (to show the truth of his humanity) he goes to the fig-tree, and finds it full of leaves, but without any fruit. Displeased with this disappointment, he curses the tree which had deceived his expectation. This action of our Saviour, in cursing the barren fig-tree, was typical; an emblem of the destruction of Jerusalem in general, and of every person in particular, that satisfies himself with a withered profession, bearing leaves only, but no fruit. As this fig-tree was, so are they *nigh, unto cursing*. Learn hence, That such as content themselves with a fruitless profession of religion, are in great danger of having God's blasting added to their barrenness.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away! 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig-tree, but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. 22 And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

The disciples being filled with admiration at the sudden withering of the fig-tree, thereupon our Saviour exhorts them to have *faith in God*; that is, firmly to rely upon the power of God whereby he is able, upon the goodness of God whereby he is willing, to fulfil his promises to us. Learn, 1. That faith is a necessary ingredient in prayer. Praying without faith, is like shooting without a bullet: it makes a noise, but does no execution. 2. That whatsoever good thing God has made the matter of a promise, shall be given to good men, praying in faith. *Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Yet note, That the faith here promised to root up mountains, must be restrained to that age of miracles, and to the persons to whom this was spoken, namely, the apostles and first propagators of the gospel; it being certain from experience, that this is no ordinary and perpetual gift of christians.

23 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? 24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven: he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? 26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. 27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

The Pharisees having often questioned our Saviour's doctrine before, they call in question his mission and authority now; although they might easily have understood his divine mission by his divine miracles. Almighty God never empowered any to work miracles that were not sent by him. When the adversaries of Christ can object nothing against his doctrine, they then quarrel with him about his commission and calling, and demand by what authority he doth teach and work miracles. Our blessed Saviour, well understanding their drift and design, answers them one question by asking them another. *The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?* Was it of divine institution, or of human invention? Implying that the calling of such as call themselves the ministers of God, ought to be from God. *No man ought to take this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron,* Heb. v. 4. The Pharisees reply, they could not tell whence John had his mission and authority. This was a manifest untruth: by refusing to tell the truth, they fall into a lie. One sin ensnares, and draws men into the commission of more. Such as will not speak exact truth, according to their knowledge, they fall into the sin of lying against their consciences. Our Saviour answers them, *Nei-*

ther tell I you by what authority I do these things. He doth not say, I cannot, or, I will not tell you; but I do not, I need not tell you, because the miracles which I work before you, are a sufficient demonstration of my divine commission, that I am sent of God amongst you; for God never set the seal of his omnipotence to a lie, or empowered an impostor to work real miracles.

28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons? and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. 29 He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. 30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. 31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

The design and scope of this parable is to show, That *publicans and harlots*, that is, the vilest, the profanest, and worst of sinners, who, upon the hearing of Christ's doctrine and miracles, did repent and believe, were in a much better condition than the proud Pharisees, who though they pretended to great measures of knowledge, and high degrees of holiness, yet did obstinately oppose Christ, disobey his doctrine, deny his miracles, and set at nought his person. Learn hence, That the greatest, the vilest, and the worst of sinners, upon their repentance and faith in Christ, shall much sooner find acceptance with God, than proud Pharisaical judiciousness, who confidently rely upon their own righteousness: *Publicans and harlots*, says Christ here to the Pharisees, *shall go into the kingdom of God before you*. Publicans were the worst sort of men, and harlots the worst kind of women; yet did these repent sooner, and believed in Christ

before the proud Pharisees. The reason was, because their hearts lay more open to the strokes of conviction, than those that were blinded by vain hopes and presumptuous confidence. Security frustrates all means of recovery.

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: 34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 27 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

In this parable God compares the Jewish church to a *vineyard*! himself to an householder: his planting, pruning, and fencing his vineyard, denotes his care to furnish his church with all needful helps and means to make it spiritually fruitful. His *letting it out to husbandmen*, signifies his committing the care of his church to the priests and Levites, the public pastors and governors of the church. His *servants* are the prophets and apostles, whom he sent from time to time, to admonish them to bring forth fruit answerable to the cost which God had expended on them. His son is Jesus Christ, whom the rulers of the Jewish church slew and murdered. The scope of the parable is to discover to the Jews, particularly to the Pharisees, their obstinate impenitency under all means, their bloody cruelty to the prophets of God, their tremendous guilt in crucifying the Son of God; for all which, God would unchurch them finally, and ruin their nation, and set up a church among the Gentiles that should bring forth better fruit

than the Jewish church ever did. From the whole note, 1. That the church is God's vineyard, exceeding dear and precious to the Planter and the Owner of it. 2. As dear as God's vineyard is unto him, in case of barrenness and unfruitfulness, it is in great danger of being destroyed and laid waste by him. 3. That the only way and course to engage God's care over his vineyard, and to prevent his giving it to other husbandmen, is to give him the fruits of it. It is but a vineyard that God lets out, it is no inheritance. No people ever had so many promises of God's favour as the Jews had, nor ever enjoyed so many privileges, whilst they stood in his favour, as the Jews did; yet though they were the first, *and the natural branches, they are broken off, and we Gentiles stand by faith: let us not be high-minded, but fear*, Rom. xi. 20.

40 When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Observe here, At the first mentioning of the parable, the Pharisees express a bitter indignation against such wicked servants, not considering what a dreadful sentence they passed upon themselves and their own nation. Little did they think, that thereby they condemned their temple to be burnt, their city to be destroyed, their country to be ruined; but in these words they vindicate God, they condemn themselves, and own the justice of God in inflicting the severest punishments on them.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Which words are the application that our Saviour makes of the foregoing parable concerning the vineyard; which the chief priests and Pharisees did not appre-

hend themselves to be concerned in, till he brought the application of it home unto them. *Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, &c.* Note, 1. The greatest mercy that God can bestow upon any people, is his giving his kingdom to them; that is, all gospel-ordinances and church-privileges, leading to the kingdom of heaven. 2. Observe the terms upon which God either gives or continues his kingdom to a church and nation; and that is, *upon bringing forth the fruits thereof*. Learn, 3. That the greatest judgment which can befall a people, is the taking away the kingdom of God from them. *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given, &c.*

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

These words are taken out of the cxviii Psalm, which the Jews understood to be a prophecy of the Messiah, and accordingly Christ applies them to himself. The church is the *building* intended, Christ himself the *Stone* rejected; the *rejecters*, or the *builders rejecting*, were the heads of the Jewish church; that is, the chief priests and Pharisees. God, the great Master-Builder of this church, takes this precious *foundation-stone* out of the rubbish, and sets it in *the head of the corner*. Nevertheless, there are some who stumble at this stone. Some through ignorance, others through malice, stumble at his person, at his doctrine, at his institutions. *These shall be broken in pieces, but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder.* That is, Christ himself will fall as a burdensome stone upon all those that knowingly and maliciously oppose him; and particularly upon the Jews, who not only rejected him, but persecuted and destroyed him. Thus Christ tells the chief priests and Pharisees their own particular doom, and also declares what will be the fatal issue of all that opposition which is made against himself and his church. It will terminate in their inevitable and irreparable destruction. *Whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.* That is, "He that stumbles on this stone, while Christ is here on earth, being offended at his doctrine, life, and miracles, shall be broken by his fall upon it; as the person stoned is by the sharp

stone which he falls upon. But he on whom this stone shall fall, when Christ is elevated to his throne of glory, shall be more violently shattered by it, as is the person stoned, by the great stone as big as two men can lift, thrown down violently upon his breast."

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

When the chief priests came to understand that these parables were all applied to them, that they were the *murderers of the King's Son*, that they were the *builders that rejected the chief corner-stone*, they were enraged at the close application made to themselves; and had not fear restrained them, would have laid violent hands upon him. Learn thence, That nothing doth more provoke and exasperate unsound hypocrites, than the particular application, and close coming home, of the word of God unto their hearts and consciences. So long as the truths of God are generally delivered, sinners are easy, looking upon themselves as unconcerned; but when the word of God comes close to them, and says, *Thou art the man*, this is thy wickedness; they are angry at the message, and rage at the messenger.

#### CHAP. XXII.

AND Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, 2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, 3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise: 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

7 But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye, therefore, into the highways; and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The design and scope of this parable of the marriage-supper, is to set forth that gracious offer of mercy and salvation, which was made by God in and through the preaching of the gospel to the church of the Jews. The gospel is here compared to a *feast*, because in a *feast* there is plenty, variety and dainties. Also to a *marriage-feast*, being full of joy, delight, and pleasure. And to a *marriage-feast made by a king*, as being full of state, magnificence, and grandeur. To this marriage-feast, or gospel-supper, Almighty God invited the church of the Jews; and the *servants* sent forth to invite them, were the prophets and apostles in general, and John the Baptist in particular, whom they entreated spitefully, and slew. The *making light of the invitation*, signifies the generality of the Jews' refusal and careless contempt of the offers of grace in the gospel. By the *armies which God sent forth to destroy those murderers*, are meant the Roman soldiers, who spoiled and laid waste the city of Jerusalem, and were the severe executioners of God's wrath and judgment upon the wicked Jews. The *highways* signify the despised Gentiles, who upon the Jews' refusal were invited to this supper, and

prevailed with to come in. *The king's coming in to see his guests*, denotes that inspection which Christ makes into his church in the times of the gospel. By the *man without the wedding garment*, understand such as are destitute of true grace and real holiness, both in heart and life. In the examination of him, Christ says, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* not, Friends, why came ye along with him? Teaching us, that if unholy persons will press in to the Lord's supper, the sin is theirs; but if we come not, because they will come, the sin is ours. The presence of an unholy person at the Lord's table, ought not to discourage us from our duty, or cause us to turn our back upon that ordinance. The command to *bind the unqualified person hand and foot, and to cast him into outer darkness*, plainly intimates, that the condition of such persons as live under the light, and enjoy the liberty of the gospel, but walk not answerably to their profession, is deplorably sad and doleful: they do not only incur damnation, but no damnation like it. *Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness*. From the whole note, 1. That the gospel, for its freeness and fulness, for its varieties and delicacies, is like a marriage-supper. 2. That gospel-invitations are mightily disesteemed. 3. That the preference which the world has in man's esteem is a great cause of the gospel's contempt. *They went one to his farm, and another to his merchandise*. 4. That such as are careless in the day of grace, shall undoubtedly be speechless in the day of judgment. 5. That Christ takes a more particular notice of every guest that cometh to his royal supper, than any of his ministers do take, or can take. There was but one person without the wedding garment, and he falls under the eye and view of Christ. 6. That it is not sufficient that we come, but clothed we must be before we come, if ever we expect a gracious welcome to Christ's supper; clothed with sincerity, clothed with humility; clothed with love and charity; if we be not thus clothed, we shall appear naked to our shame, and hear that dreadful charge, *Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth*. See Luke xiv. 17.

14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

This is our blessed Saviour's application

of the foregoing parable to the Jews; he tells them, that many of them, indeed all of them were called, that is, invited to the gospel-supper; but with few, very few of them, was found that sincere faith, and that sound repentance, which doth accompany salvation. Learn hence, That amongst the multitude of those that are called by the gospel unto holiness and obedience, few, very few comparatively, do obey that call, and shall be eternally saved.

15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. 16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men. 17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar, or not? 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21 They say unto him, Cesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. 22 When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

Here we have another new design to entangle our blessed Saviour in his discourse. Where observe, 1. The persons employed to put the ensnaring question to our Saviour, namely, *the Pharisees and the Herodians*. The Pharisees were against paying tribute to Cesar; looking upon themselves as a free people, and the emperor as an usurper. But the Herodians were for it. Herod being made by the Roman emperor king of the Jews, was zealous for having the Jews pay tribute to Cesar; and such of the Jews as sided with him, and particularly his courtiers and favourites, were called Herodians. Observe, 2. The policy and wicked craft here used, in employing these two contrary sects to put the question to our Saviour

concerning tribute; thereby laying him under a necessity (as they hoped) to offend one side, let him answer how he would. If to please the Pharisees he denied paying tribute to Cesar, then he is accused of sedition; if to gratify the Herodians he voted for paying tribute, then he is looked upon as an enemy to the liberty of his country, and exposed to a popular odium: it has been the old policy of Satan and his instruments, to draw the ministers of God into dislike, either with the magistrates or with the people, that they may either fall under the censure of the one, or the displeasure of the other. Observe, 3. With what wisdom and caution our Lord answers them; he first calls for the tribute-money, which was the Roman penny, answering to seven pence halfpenny of our money, two of which they paid by way of tribute, or poll-money, for every head to the emperor. Christ asks them *whose image or superscription their coin bore?* They answer, *Cesar's*: *Render then, says Christ, to Cesar the things that are Cesar's.* As if he had said, "The admitting of the Roman coin amongst you, is a testimony that you are under subjection to the Roman emperor, because the coining and imposing of money is an act of sovereign authority. Now you have owned Cesar's authority over you, by accepting of his coin as current amongst you, give unto him his just dues, and render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's." Learn hence, That there was no truer paymaster of the king's dues, than he that was King of kings; he preached it, and he practised it, *Matt. xvii. 27.* And as Christ is no Enemy to the civil rights of princes, and his religion exempts none from paying their civil duties; so princes should be as careful not to rob him of his divine honour, as he is not to wrong them of their civil rights. As Christ requires all his followers to render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's so should princes oblige all their subjects to render unto God the things that are God's.

23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25 Now there were with

us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. 31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. 33 And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.

Our blessed Saviour having put the Pharisees and Herodians to silence, next the Sadducees encounter him. This sect denied the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, and as an objection against both they propound a case to our Saviour, of a woman that had had seven brethren successively to her husbands: they demand, *Whose wife of the seven this woman shall be at the resurrection?* As if they had said, "If there be a resurrection of bodies, surely there will be a resurrection of relations too, and the other world will be like this, in which men will marry as they do here. And if so, whose wife of the seven shall this woman be, they all having an equal claim to her?" Now our Saviour, for resolving of this question, 1. Shows the different state of men in this world and in the other world. *The children of this world, says Christ, marry, and are given in marriage; but in the resurrection they do neither.* As if our Lord had said, "After men have lived awhile in this world they die, and therefore marriage is necessary to maintain a succession of mankind; but in the other world men should become immortal, and live for ever; and then the reason of marriage

will wholly cease. For when men can die no more, there will be no need of any new supplies of mankind." 2. Our Saviour having got clear of the Sadducees' objection, by taking away the ground and foundation of it, he produceth an argument for a proof of the soul's immortality and the body's resurrection. Thus, "Those to whom Almighty God pronounced himself a God, are alive; But God pronounced himself a God to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, many hundred years after their bodies were dead; therefore their souls are yet alive, federally alive unto God: their covenant relation lives still, otherwise God could not be their God: *for he is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. If one relation fails, the other, necessarily fails with it; if God be their God, then certainly they are in being, *for God is not the God of the dead*; that is, of those that are utterly perished. Therefore it must needs be, that although their bodies be naturally dead, yet do their souls still live, and their bodies shall also live again at the resurrection of the just." From the whole, note, 1. That there is no opinion so absurd, no error so monstrous, that having had a mother will die for the lack of a nurse. The beastly opinion of the mortality of the soul, and the annihilation of the body, finds Sadducees to profess and propagate it. Note, 2. The certainty of another life after this, in which men shall be eternally happy or intolerably miserable, according as they behave themselves here: though some men live like beasts, they shall not die like them, nor shall their last end be like theirs. Note, 3. That glorified saints in the morning of their resurrection shall be like unto the glorious angels: not like them in essence and nature, but like them in their properties and qualities, in holiness and purity, in immortality and incorruptibility, and in their manner of living; they shall no more stand in need of meat and drink than the angels do; but shall live the same heavenly, immortal, and incorruptible life, that the angels live. Note, 4. That all those that are in covenant with God, whose God the Lord is, their souls do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies at the resurrection shall be sharers in the same happiness with their souls. If God be just, the soul must live, and the body must rise: for good men must be rewarded, and wicked men punished; God will most certainly, some time or other, plentifully reward the righteous, and pun-

ish the evil-doers; but this being not always done in this life, the justice of God requires it to be done in the next.

34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. 35 Then one of them, *which was a lawyer*, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, 36 Master, *which is the great commandment in the law?* 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The Sadducees being put by Christ to silence, the Pharisees again encounter him; they send to him a lawyer, that is, one of their interpreters and expounders of the law of Moses, who propounds this question to him, *Which is the great commandment of the law?* Our Saviour tells them, *It is to love the Lord with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind*. That is, with all the powers, faculties, and abilities of the soul, with the greatest measure and highest degrees of love. This is the sum and substance of the duties of the first table. *And the second is like unto it*, not equal with it, but like unto it. The duties of the second table are of the same authority, and of the same necessity with the first. As a man cannot be saved without the love of God, so neither without the love of his neighbour. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*; that is, the whole duty of man, required by Moses and the prophets, is comprehended in, and may be reduced to, these two heads, namely, the love of God and our neighbour. From the whole note, 1. That the fervency of all our affections, and particularly the supremacy of our love, is required by God as his right and due. Love must pass through and possess all the faculties of the soul; the mind must meditate upon God, the will must choose and embrace him, and the affections must take complacency and delight in him; the measure of loving God, is to love him without measure. God reckons that we love him

not at all, if we love him not above all. 1. We must love him above all, *appretiative*, so as to prize him in our judgment and esteem above all and before all things. 2. We are to love God above all things *comparative*, preferring his favours above all things, comparatively hating whatever stands in competition with him. 3. We are to love God above all things *intensive*. That is, our longing desires must run out after him, we must pant and thirst for the enjoyment of him. We must love every thing in subordination to God, and nothing co-ordinately or equally with God. Note, 2. That thus to love God is the first and great commandment. *Great*, in regard of the object, which is God, the first Cause, and the chief Good. *Great*, in regard of the obligation of it. To love God is so indispensable a command, that God himself cannot free us from the obligation of it; for so long as he is God, and we his creatures, we shall lie under a natural and necessary obligation to love and serve him. *Great*, in regard of the duration of it, when faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition; love will then be perfected in a full enjoyment. Note, 3. That every man may, yea, ought to love himself, not his sinful self, but his natural self, and especially his spiritual self, the new nature in him. This it ought to be his particular care to increase and strengthen. Indeed there is no express command in scripture for a man to love himself, because the light of nature directs, and the law of nature binds and moves, every man so to do. God has put a principle of self-love and self-preservation into all his creatures, but especially into man. Note, 4. As every man ought to love himself, so it is every man's duty to *love his neighbour as himself*. 1. Not as he *does* love himself, but as he *ought* to love himself. Not in the same degree and measure that he loves himself, but after the same manner, and with the same kind of love that he loves himself. As we love ourselves freely and readily, sincerely and unfeignedly, tenderly and compassionately, constantly and perseveringly; so should we love our neighbour. Though we are not commanded to love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves, yet we are to love him like as we love ourselves. Note, lastly, That the duties of the first and second table are inseparable. The love of God and our neighbour must not be parted. *He that loveth not his neighbour whom he hath seen, never loved God whom he hath*

*not seen*. A conscientious regard to the duties of both tables, will be an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession. Let it then be our prayer and daily endeavour that *we may love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves*. For this is the sum of the law, and the substance of the gospel.

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son of David*. 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord? saying, 44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. 45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? 46 And no man was able to answer him a word; neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more questions.

The Pharisees had often put forth several questions maliciously unto Christ, and now Christ puts forth one question innocently unto them; namely, What they thought of the Messiah whom they expected? They reply, that he was to be *the Son of David*, a secular prince descending from David, that should deliver them from the power of the Romans, and restore them to their civil rights. This was the notion they had of the Messiah, that he should be a man, *the Son of David*, and nothing more. Our Saviour replies, Whence is it then that David calls the Messiah Lord? Psal. cx. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord: how could he be both David's Lord and David's Son? No son is lord to his father; therefore if Christ were David's Sovereign, he must be more than man, more than David's son.* As Man, so he was David's Son: as God-man, so he was David's Lord. Note hence, That although Christ was really and truly Man, yet he was more than a bare man: he was Lord unto, and was the salvation of, his own forefathers. Note, 2. That the only way to reconcile the scriptures which speak concerning Christ, is to believe and acknowledge him to be God and Man in one person. The Messiah as a man was to come forth out of David's loins, but as



God-man he was David's Sovereign and Saviour. As Man, he was his father's Son ; as God, he was Lord to his own father.

#### CHAP. XXIII.

**T**HEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, **2** Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat : **3** All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do ; but do not ye after their works : for they say, and do not.

The scribes and Pharisees, so often mentioned in the gospels, were the great doctors and spiritual guides amongst the Jews. Scribe is the name of an office ; Pharisee the name of a sect. They were both learned in the law and teachers of the law of Moses. Our blessed Saviour in the former part of this gospel held many conferences with these men, and used the most persuasive arguments to convince them both of their errors and wickedness. But their obstinacy and malice being such, that neither our Saviour's ministry nor miracles could convince them ; hereupon our Lord denounces in this chapter eight several woes against them. But first he charitably warns his disciples and the multitude against the pernicious practices of this sort of men, saying, *The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat ; that is, they teach and expound the law of Moses, which they were wont to do sitting. Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.* That is, " What they teach you consonant to the word of God, and agreeable to the writings of Moses and the prophets ; if they go not out of Moses' chair into their own unwritten traditions, follow their doctrine and obey their precepts. *But do not after their works ; follow not their example, take heed of their pride and hypocrisy, of their ambition and vain-glory. Obey their doctrine wherein it is sound ; but follow not their example wherein it is corrupt.*" Learn, 1. That the personal miscarriages of ministers must by no means beget a disesteem of their office and ministry. Charity must teach us to distinguish betwixt the calling and the crime. 2. That the infallible truths of God recommended to us by a vicious teacher, ought to be entertained and obeyed by us without either scruple or prejudice. What the Pharisees themselves, says Christ, bid you observe, *that observe and do.* 3. That no people

are obliged to follow their teachers' pattern and example any farther than it is agreeable to scripture-rule, and conformable to Christ's example : *Do not after their works, who say and do not.*

**4** For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders ; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.

These heavy burdens which the Pharisees laid upon the people's shoulders, were counsels and directions, rules and canons, austerities and severities, which the Pharisees introduced, and imposed upon their hearers, but would not undergo the least part of those severities themselves. If we do not follow our own counsels, we must not think to oblige our people to follow them. No man ought to press upon others what he is unwilling to perform himself. It is very sinful to give that counsel to others which we refuse to take ourselves.

**5** But all their works they do for to be seen of men : they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, **6** And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, **7** And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

In these words our blessed Saviour admonishes his disciples and the multitude to take heed of imitating the Pharisees in their ostentation and hypocrisy, in their ambition and vain-glory ; and he instances in three particulars wherein they expressed it ; 1. *All their works, says Christ, they do to be seen of men.* To do good works that men may see them, is a duty ; but to do all or any of our works to be seen of men, is hypocrisy. 2. *They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.* These phylacteries were certain scrolls and labels of parchment, in which were written the ten commandments, and some sections of the law ; these they tied to their foreheads, and pinned upon their left sleeve, that the law of God might be continually before their eyes, and perpetually in their remembrance. This ceremony they judged God prescribed them, *Deut. vi. 8. Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine*

*eyes.* By enlarging the borders of their garments, our Saviour points at the fringes and blue ribbons which the Jews did wear upon their garments, in obedience to the command, *Numb. xv. 37, 38.* As the threads in those fringes and ribbons close woven together did represent the connexion, complication, and inseparable conjunction, of God's commandments among themselves; so the wearing of these fringes was to put them in mind of the laws of God, that which way soever they turned their eyes, they might meet with some pious admonition to keep the law of God. Now the vain-glorious Pharisees, that they might be thought more mindful of the law of God than other men, did make their phylacteries broader, and their fringes thicker and longer, than other men. 3. They fondly affected, and ambitiously contended for, the first and uppermost seats in all conventions, as at feasts, and in the synagogues, and loved to be respectfully saluted in open and public places, and to have titles of honour, such as *Rabbi, Master, Father, and Doctor*, put upon them. Now that which our Saviour condemns, is the Pharisees' fond affectation of these little things, and unduly seeking their own honour and glory. It was not their talking, *but their loving the uppermost rooms at feasts*, that Christ condemns. From the whole note, 1. That hypocrites are fond of affecting ceremonial observations, and outward parts of commanded duties, neglecting the substance of religion itself. These Pharisees were for carrying a library of God's law on their clothes, scarce a letter of it in their hearts. They wore the law of God, as frontlets before their eyes, but not engraven on the tables of their hearts. Observe, 2. That the nature of hypocrisy is to study more to seem religious in the sight of men, than to be religious indeed before God. The hypocrite is the world's saint, and not God's; he courts the world's acceptance more than the divine favour and approbation.

8 But be not ye called Rabbi : for one is your Master, *even Christ* ; and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no *man* your Father upon the earth : for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters : for one is your Master, *even Christ*. 11 But he that is greatest among you shall be

your servant. 12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

The word *rabbi* signifies a doctor or teacher, eminently endowed with variety of knowledge, whose place it was to sit in an exalted chair, or chief seat in the synagogue; their disciples and scholars sat upon lower forms at the feet of their teachers. Our Saviour doth not simply condemn the giving or receiving of these titles of Rabbi, Master, and Father; but the things forbidden are, 1. A vain-glorious affectation of such titles as these, the ambitious seeking of them, and glorying in them. 2. He condemns that authority and dominion over the consciences of men which the Pharisaical doctors had usurped; telling the people that they ought to believe all their doctrines, and practise all their injunctions, as the commands of the living God. They did in effect assume infallibility to themselves. Learn hence, 1. That there have been in all ages in the church a sort of teachers, who have usurped authority and dominion over the faith and consciences of men. 2. That Christians ought not to submit their faith and consciences in matters of religion to any human authority whatsoever, nor to give up themselves absolutely to the conduct of any man's judgment or opinion in matters of faith. 3. That Christ alone, the great Prophet and infallible Teacher of his church, is the only person to whose doctrine and precepts we owe absolute faith and obedience: *One is your Master, even Christ*. 4. As God will abase, and men will despise, the proud, especially ministers who are such; so shall God exalt, and men will honour, them that stoop to the meanest services for the good of souls: *Whoso exalteth himself shall be abased*. This was a sentence often used by our Saviour, and was a frequent saying among the Jews.

13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men : for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

From the thirteenth verse to the thirtieth, the Pharisees have eight several woes denounced against them by our Saviour; the first is, for perverting the scriptures, and keeping the true sense and knowledge of

them from the people. This St. Matthew calls *the shutting up of the kingdom of heaven against men*. St. Luke calls it, *a taking away the key of knowledge from men*, which is an allusion to a known custom among the Jews in admission of their doctors; for those that had authority given them to interpret the law and the prophets, were solemnly admitted into that office, by delivering them a key and a table-book. So that by the key of knowledge, is meant the interpretation and understanding of the scriptures; and by *taking away the key of knowledge*, is signified, first, that they arrogated to themselves alone the understanding of the scriptures. Secondly, That they kept the true knowledge of the scriptures from the people, especially the prophecies which concerned the Messiah: and so they hindered men from embracing our Saviour's doctrine, who were otherwise well enough disposed for it. Learn hence, 1. That the knowledge of the holy scriptures is absolutely and indispensably necessary in order to salvation. This our Saviour calls *the key*, which lets men into the kingdom of heaven. Learn, 2. That great is the guilt, and inexcusable the fault, of those who deprive the people of the knowledge of the scriptures. *They shut the kingdom of heaven against men*, and do what in them lies to hinder their eternal salvation. Men may miscarry with their knowledge, but they are sure to perish for want of knowledge.

14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

The second woe denounced against the Pharisees, is for their gross hypocrisy, in colouring over their covetousness with a pretence of religion; making long prayers in the temple and synagogues for widows, and thereupon persuading them to give bountifully to the Corban, or the common treasury of the temple, some part of which was employed for their maintenance. Learn, 1. It is no new thing for designing hypocrites to cover the foulest transgressions with the cloak of religion. The Pharisees made long prayers a cover for their covetousness. 2. That to make use of religion in policy for worldly advantage

sake, is the way to be damned with a vengeance for religion sake. *Woe unto you, scribes, &c.*

15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

The next woe denounced is for their false-ended zeal and earnestness in proselyting heathens to the Jewish religion; not with a pious intention to save them, but to serve themselves upon them, to have their consciences and purses under their power. And when you have poisoned them, says our Saviour, by your corrupt doctrine, and hardened them in a course of sin by your wicked example, *they are more the children of hell than before* you practised upon them. Learn, 1. Great is the diligence and indefatigable the industry which false teachers use in gaining proselytes to their opinion and party; *they compass sea and land to make one proselyte*. 2. That such as are proselyted to error, are oft-times faster rivetted in their false opinions than their teachers themselves: *they are made two-fold more the children of hell than yourselves*.

16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides! which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. 17 Ye fools and blind! for whether is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. 19 Ye fools, and blind! for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? 20 Whoso, therefore, shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. 22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

The fourth woe which our Saviour de-

nounceth against the Pharisees, is for their false and erroneous doctrine concerning oaths. 1. They taught men to swear by the creatures. 2. They taught that some oaths made by the creatures were obligatory and binding, others not: particularly they affirm, that *if a man swear by the temple, or the altar, it is nothing*; that is, he was not bound by such an oath: but *if a man swear by the gold of the temple and the altar*; that is, by the gifts offered to the Corban, or treasury of the temple, and by the sacrifices and oblations on the altar; such an oath they affirmed was binding, because it was for their profit that the gifts on the altar, and the gold brought into the treasury, should be accounted most holy, seeing that would encourage the people to be more ready to contribute and offer. This horrid hypocrisy and covetousness our blessed Saviour here sharply reproveth, and shows that oaths made by the creatures, though unlawful, yet being once made, did oblige, as if the parties had sworn by God himself. For he that swears by the temple, swears by it and him that dwelleth therein. Learn, 1. That swearing by the creatures is no new sin, but as old as the Pharisees. 2. That swearing by the creatures is a great profanation of the name of God, and a mighty provocation to him. 3. That this notwithstanding, if the matter of such oaths be not sinful, they are obligatory and binding. He that sweareth by the creatures, sweareth indeed by the God of the creatures: For, says our Saviour, *he that sweareth by the heavens, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon*.

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 24 Ye blind guides! which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

The next woe denounced is for the Pharisees' ostentation of a precise keeping of the law in smaller matters, and neglecting weightier duties: *They paid tithe of mint, anise, and cummin*; but at the same time omitted judgment, mercy, and faith; that is, just dealing with men, charity towards

the poor, and faithfulness in their promises and covenants one with another. This, says our Saviour, is to *strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*. A proverbial expression, intimating, that some persons pretend great niceness and scrupulosity about small matters, and none, or but little, about duties of the greatest moment. Hence note, 1. That hypocrites lay the greatest stress upon the least matters in religion, and place holiness most in those things where God places it least. *Ye tithe mint, &c. but neglect the weightier matters of the law*. This is indeed the bane of all religion and true piety, to prefer ritual and human institutions before divine commands, and the practice of natural religion. Thus to do is a certain sign of gross hypocrisy. Observe, 2. That although some duties are of greater moment than others, yet a good man will omit none, but perform every duty, the least as well as the greatest, in obedience to the command of God. *These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*.

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 26 Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Our Saviour doth not here condemn their legal or traditional washing of pots or cups, or any external decency and cleanliness in conversation; but his design is to show them the vanity of outward purity, without inward sanctity, and to convince them of the necessity of cleansing the heart, in order to the purifying and reforming the life: plainly intimating, 1. That men's lives could not be so bad, if their hearts were not worse, all the obliquity of their lives proceeding from the impurity of their hearts and natures. 2. That an holy heart will be accompanied with an holy life. A man may be outwardly pure, and yet inwardly filthy; but he that has a pure heart will live a pure and holy life. Cleanse *that which is within the cup, that the outside may be clean also*.

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are

like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Here we have a woe denounced against the Pharisees for cheating and deceiving the people with an outward show, an external appearance, of piety and religion: their lives were seemingly very religious, but their hearts were full of hypocrisy and all impurity, like sepulchres painted without, and full of rottenness within. Whence learn, That the great design of hypocrisy is to cheat the world with a vain and empty show of piety. The ambition of the hypocrite is to be thought good, not to be so; he is the world's saint, not God's.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. 32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

This is the eighth woe denounced by our blessed Saviour against the Pharisees for their grand hypocrisy, in pretending great honour to the saints departed, building their tombs, and garnishing their sepulchres, and declaring against their fathers' impiety, *That had they lived in their days, they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.* Now their hypocrisy appeared in three particulars. 1. In that they continued in their own wickedness, and yet recommended the saints departed; they magnify the saints, but multiply their sins, and instead of imitating their virtues, they content themselves with garnishing their sepulchres. 2. In professing great respect to the dead saints, and at the same time persecuting the living. Palpable hypocrisy! And

yet as gross as it is, it prevails to this day. The church of Rome, who magnify martyrs, and canonize saints departed, have yet added to their numbers by shedding their blood. 3. In taking false measures of their love to the saints departed, from their building their tombs, and garnishing their sepulchres; whereas the best evidence of our love unto them, is the imitating their virtues, and cherishing their followers. It is gross hypocrisy to pay respect to the relics of saints, and veneration to their images; and at the same time to persecute and afflict their followers. Learn hence, 1. That the world has all along loved the dead saints better than living ones. *Mortui non mordent.* The dead saints' example, how bright soever, is not so scorching and troublesome at a distance; and he himself no longer stands in other men's light; whereas the living saints' example is a cutting reproof to sin and vice. Observe, 2. That there is a certain civility in human nature, which leads men to a just commendation of the dead, and to a due estimation of their worth. The Pharisees here, though they persecuted the prophets whilst alive, yet had they a mighty veneration for their piety and virtue after they were dead, and thought no honour too great to be done unto them. Note, 3. That it is the grossest hypocrisy to pretend to love goodness, and yet hate and persecute good men. These hypocritical Pharisees pretended highly to piety and religion, and at the same time killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto them. 4. That the highest honour we can pay to the saints departed, is not by raising monuments and building tombs to their memory; but by a careful imitation of their piety and virtue, following the holiness of their lives, and their patience and constancy at their deaths.

34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you,

All these things shall come upon this generation.

Observe here, A prophetic prediction, and a severe denunciation. 1. A prediction foretelling what cruel usage the apostles should meet with from the Jews, killing and crucifying some, scourging and stoning others; which accordingly was fulfilled in the crucifying of St. Peter, the scourging of St. Paul, in the stoning of St. Stephen, and killing of St. James. The first planters and propagators of the gospel sealed their doctrine with their blood, and the blood of the martyrs has all along been the seed of the church. Observe, 2. A severe denunciation, *that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from Abel to Zacharias, the son of Jehoiada*, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20. who was the last prophet whose murder is related by name in the Old Testament. These words are not to be understood as if the end and intent of Christ's sending the prophets were that the Jews might put them to death, and bring their righteous blood upon themselves. This was the consequence and event indeed of their sending, but by no means the design and intent of it. Learn, 1. That raging persecutors have no regard either to the extraordinary mission or eminent sanctity of persons who reprove them for their sins. *I send unto you prophets*, says our Saviour, *wise men, and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify*. 2. That as the piety of the persons, so neither can the sanctity of the place, discourage and deter bloody persecutors from their rage and fury against the prophets of God. In the temple itself, in the court of the house of the Lord, *even between the porch and the altar*, was Zacharias slain. That it is a righteous thing with God to punish the children for the impieties of their parents; this is to be understood, 1. Where the children tread in their fathers' steps, and continue in their parents' sins; which they do, if they do not confess them, abhor them, and be humbled for them. 2. This is to be understood of temporal evils, not of eternal punishments. No man shall for his fathers' sins lie down in everlasting burnings. As our fathers' faith will not let us into heaven, so neither will their impiety shut us into hell. At the day of judgment every man shall be separately considered, according to his deeds.

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou

that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Our Lord concludes this chapter with a pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem. His ingemination or doubling of the word, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, shows the vehemency of Christ's affection towards them, and the sincerity of his desires for their salvation. Observe, 1. The great kindness and compassion of Christ to the Jews in general, and Jerusalem in particular, set forth by a lively metaphor and similitude; that of *an hen gathering her chickens under her wings*. As the hen doth tenderly cherish, and carefully hide and cover her young from the eye of the destroyer; so would Christ have shrouded and sheltered his people from all those birds of prey, and particularly from the Roman eagle, by which they were at last devoured. Again, as the hen continueth her call to her young ones from morning to night, and holds out her wings for shelter to them all the day long; so did Christ wait for this people's repentance and conversion for more than forty years after they had killed his prophets, and murdered himself, before they met with a final overthrow. Observe, 2. The amazing obstinacy and wilfulness of this people, in rejecting this grace and favour, this kindness and condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ: *I would have gathered you, but ye would not*. Observe, 3. The fatal issue of this obstinacy, *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*. *Is left*; that is, certainly and suddenly will be so. The present tense put for the *paulo post futurum*, it denotes both the certainty and nearness of this people's ruin. Learn, 1. That the ruin and destruction of sinners is wholly chargeable upon themselves; that is, on their own wilfulness and obstinacy: *I would have gathered you*, says Christ, *but ye would not*. Learn, 2. How deplorably and inexcusably they will perish, who perish by their own wilfulness under the gospel. 3. That there is no de-

aire like unto God's desire of a people's repentance ; no longing like unto God's longing for a people's salvation : *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee ! When shall it once be !* Christ did very seriously desire the conversion of the Jews, who continued still in their impenitency and unbelief. And consequently they whom he so seriously desired to convert, might have been converted, but they would not be so : *I would have gathered you, but ye would not.*

## CHAP. XXIV.

**A**ND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple : and his disciples came to him, for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things ? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Our blessed Saviour had often acquainted his disciples with his approaching death at Jerusalem. *The Son of man must go up to Jerusalem to be crucified.* Now in this chapter he acquaints them with the destruction that should come upon Jerusalem in general, and upon the temple in particular, for their putting him, the Son of God, to death. The disciples, looking upon the temple with wonder and admiration, were apt to think that the temple, in regard of its invincible strength, could not be destroyed ; or, at the least, in regard of its incredible magnificence, it was great pity it should be destroyed ; and accordingly they say to Christ, *See what goodly buildings are here.* As if they had said, Master, what great pity it is, that such a magnificent structure should become a ruinous heap ! But hence we learn, 1. That sin brings cities and kingdoms, as well as particular and private persons, to their end. There are no places so strong, but an Almighty God is able to destroy them, and sin is sufficient to lay them waste. Observe, 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever appearing improbabilities there may be to the contrary. God had threatened Jerusalem with destruction for her sin, and now it is not all her strength that can oppose his power. Learn, 3. That notwithstanding magnificence and worldly glory doth mightily dazzle our eye, yet how little doth it affect

Christ's heart. Even the temple itself, that most magnificent structure, Christ values no more than an heap of rubbish, when the impiety of the worshippers had devoted it to destruction. *Not one stone, says Christ, shall be left upon another unthrown down.* This threatening was fulfilled forty years after Christ's death, when Titus the Roman emperor destroyed the city and burnt the temple, and Turnus Rufus, the general of his army, plowed up the very foundation upon which the temple stood. Thus was the threatening of God fulfilled, Jer. xxvi. 18. *Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps.* The truth and veracity, the faithfulness and fidelity of God, is as much concerned in the execution of his threatenings, as in the performance of his promises.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world ? 4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many.

A double question is here propounded by the disciples to our Saviour. First, As to the time of the temple's destruction. Secondly, As to the signs of that destruction. As to the former, the time when the temple should be destroyed. See the curiosity of human nature, both in desiring to know what should be hereafter, and also when that hereafter should be. Thence learn, That there is found with all of us an itching curiosity and desire, rather to inquire and pry into the hidden counsels of God's secret will, than to obey the manifest declarations of God's revealed will : *Tell us when these things shall be.* As to their second question, *What should be the sign of his coming ;* our Saviour acquaints them with this among many others, *That there should arise false Christs, false prophets,* and seducers, a multitude of impostors, that would draw many after them ; therefore he bids them *take heed and beware.* Where observe, That Christ doth not gratify his disciples' curiosity, but acquaints them with their present duty, to watch against deceivers and seducers, who should

have the impudence to affirm themselves to be Christ. Some, Christ personal, or the Messiah; others Christ doctrinal, affirming their erroneous opinions to be Christ's mind and doctrine. From the whole, note, 1. That there will be many seducers, many erroneous persons, and false opinions, before the end of the world; for Jerusalem's destruction was a type and emblem of the world's destruction. 2. That such seducers will come in Christ's name, and their errors and false opinions shall be given out to be the mind of Christ. 3. That many will be seduced and carried away with their fair pretences and plausible deceits. 4. That Christ's own disciples had need to take heed, lest they themselves, *being led away by the error of the wicked, do fall from their own steadfastness. Take heed that no man deceive you; for many will come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.*

6 And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All *these are* the beginning of sorrows.

The next sign which our Saviour gives his disciples of Jerusalem's destruction, is the many broils and commotions, civil discords and dissensions, that should be found amongst the Jews: *famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, fearful sights and signs in the air.* And Josephus declares, that there appeared in the air chariots and horses, men skirmishing in the clouds, and encompassing the city; and that a blazing star, in fashion of a sword, hung over the city for a year together. Learn, 1. That war, pestilence, and famine, are judgments and calamities inflicted by God upon a sinful people for their contempt of Christ and gospel-grace. *Ye shall hear of wars, famine, and pestilence.* 2. That although these be mighty and terrible judgments, yet are they the forerunners of worse judgments. *All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then

shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Our Saviour here goes on in giving farther signs of the destruction of Jerusalem. 1. He declares the sharp persecutions which should fall upon the apostles themselves; *They shall kill you.* Thence learn, That the keenest and sharpest edge of persecution is usually turned against the ambassadors of Christ, and falls heaviest on the ministers of God. *You shall be hated and killed.* The next sign is the apostasy of professors upon the account of those persecutions: *Then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and hate one another.* Learn hence, that times of persecution for christianity are constantly times of apostasy from the christian profession. 2. That apostates are usually the bitterest persecutors; *Omnis apostata est osor sui ordinis.* They shall betray one another, and hate one another. A third sign is the abounding of false teachers: *Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.* Where note, That the fair pretences and subtle practices of heretical teachers have drawn off many from the truth, whom open persecution could not drive from it. A fourth sign is the decay and abatement of zeal for God, and love one to another: *The love of many shall wax cold,* that is, both towards God and towards man. When iniquity abounds, trouble waxes hot; and when trouble waxes hot, false love waxes cold, and true love waxes warmer than it was before; the cold blasts of persecution blow up the love of a few, but blow out the love of many more. These are the signs laid down by our Saviour foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem: and forasmuch as Jerusalem's destruction was not only a forerunner, but a figure of Christ's coming to judgment, these are also the signs foretelling the approach of that dreadful day. Verse 13. *He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.* Our Saviour closes his discourse with an exhortation to constancy and perseverance: teaching us, That there is no such way to overcome temptation and persecution, as by keeping



our integrity, and persevering in our fidelity to Christ. 2. That constancy and perseverance in our integrity and fidelity towards Christ, is sometimes attended with temporal salvation and deliverance in this life, but shall certainly be rewarded with eternal salvation in the next: *He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Here our blessed Saviour comforts his disciples with a threefold consideration. 1. That his gospel, how hated and persecuted soever, should be plainly and persuasively preached: *The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached.* Therefore called the gospel of the kingdom, because it discovers the way to the kingdom of heaven. Observe, 2. The extent of the gospel's publication, *It shall be preached unto all nations,* that is, to the Gentile world; not only among the Jews, but among the chief and principal nations of the Gentiles. Observe, 3. The design and end of the gospel's publication, and that is, for a witness or testimony; namely, for a witness of God's grace and mercy offered to sinners, and of their obstinacy who reject it. Learn thence, That the preaching of the gospel, wherever it comes, proves a testimony to them to whom it comes. To the humble and teachable, it is a testimony for, to the scorers and despisers, it is a testimony against; or in the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. ii. 16, *To some it is the savour of death unto death; to others, the savour of life unto life.*

15 When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,)

The sense is, "When ye shall see the armies of the Romans, who are an abomination unto you, and an occasion of great desolation where they go; when you shall see that abominable, dissolute army begirting the holy city of Jerusalem, then call to mind the prophecy of Daniel, which primarily belonged to Antiochus, but secondarily to Titus, and shall now be fully completed: for the siege shall not be raised till both city and temple be razed

to the ground." Learn thence, That God has instruments ready at his call to lay waste the strongest cities, and to ruin the most flourishing kingdoms which do oppose the tenders of his grace, and can make those whom most men abhor, to be the occasions of their destruction.

16 Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

The meaning is, "As soon as you shall see the Roman army appear before the city of Jerusalem, let every one that values his own safety, fly as far and as fast as he can, even as Lot fled out of Sodom; and let such as fly be glad if by flight they can save their lives, though they lose their goods, their clothes, and all things beside." From hence learn, 1. That when Almighty God is pouring forth his fury upon a sinful people, it is lawful, yea a necessary duty, by flight to endeavour the hiding and sheltering themselves from the approaching calamity and desolation: *When ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then flee to the mountains.* 2. That in the case of flight before a bloody enemy and army, if we lose all that we have, and our lives be given us, we fare well, and the Lord deals very mercifully with us.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day.

Here our Saviour declares the doleful distress of those that could not flee from the siege of Jerusalem; as women big with child, and such as give suck, who by that means are like to lose their lives. And he farther adds, that it should increase the calamity, if their flight should happen to be in the winter, when none can fly either fast or far; or if they should be forced to flee on the sabbath-day, when the Jews scrupled travelling farther than a sabbath-day's journey, which was about two miles. From thence learn, That it is a great addition to the trouble and disquiet of a good man's spirit, when the day of his spiritual rest is interrupted, and instead of enjoying communion with God

in his house, he is driven from house and home, and flees before the face of an enraged enemy. *Pray ye*, says our Saviour, *that your flight be not on the sabbath-day*; that being a day of holy rest.

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

The doleful miseries and dreadful calamities which were coming upon the Jews in general, and upon Jerusalem in particular, are here foretold by our Saviour, partly from the Roman army without, and partly from the seditions and factions of the zealots within, who committed such outrages and slaughters, that there were no less than an hundred thousand slain, and ninety-seven thousand carried away captive, and made prisoners. They that bought our Saviour for thirty pence, were now themselves sold thirty for a penny. Now did the temple itself become a sacrifice, a whole burnt-offering, and was consumed to ashes. Yet observe, Christ promises that these calamitous days shall be shortened for the elect's sake. God had a remnant, which he determined should survive this destruction, to be an holy seed; and accordingly the providence of God so ordered, that the city was taken in six months, and the whole country depopulated in eighteen. Whence observe, How the Lord intermixes some mercy with the extremest misery that doth befall a people for their sin. On this side hell, no sinners can say that they feel the strokes of justice to the utmost, or that they have judgment without mercy.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not

forth: behold, *he is in the secret chambers*; believe it not.

The Jews had all along cherished in themselves a vain expectation, that the promised Messiah should be a temporal deliverer, that should set them at liberty from the power and slavery of the Romans; and accordingly Christ declares to his disciples here, that immediately before Jerusalem's destruction, several persons, taking the advantage of this expectation, would make themselves heads of parties, and pretend that they were the true Messiah, who would save and deliver them from their enemies, if they would repair to them, and follow after them. Hereupon our Lord cautions his disciples against such false Christs and false prophets, and bids them *believe them not*, though they did never so many great signs and wonders, and promised them never such glorious deliverances. Learn hence, That the church's great danger is from seducers that come in Christ's name, and pretend to work signs and wonders by his authority. 2. That such is the power of seduction and delusion, that many are carried away with seducers and false teachers. 3. That the elect themselves, if left unto themselves, might be seduced; but divine power guards them against seduction and delusion: *They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect*. Which phrase imports not what the event would be upon the elect, but the vehemency of the endeavours of seducers; namely, that they would do the utmost that they could, to shock the christian, and cause him to fall upon his steadfastness.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

There is a threefold coming of Christ spoken of in the New Testament. 1. His coming in his spiritual kingdom by the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles. 2. His coming to destroy Jerusalem forty years after his ascension. 3. His final coming to judgment at the great day. All these comings of the Son of man, for their suddenness and unexpectedness, are compared unto lightning, which in a moment breaketh out of the east, and shineth unto the west. Learn hence, That the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the judging of the wicked

and impenitent sinners, will be a very certain, sudden, and unexpected appearance.

28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

If the coming of Christ be understood in the former verse of his coming to destroy Jerusalem, then by the *carcass* in this verse are to be understood the people of Jerusalem, and the body of the Jewish nation; and by *eagles* are to be understood the Roman armies, who carried an eagle in their standard. These were the instruments which Almighty God made use of, as his rod and scourge, to chastise and punish the people of Jerusalem. Learn thence, That the appointed messengers of God's wrath, and the instruments of his vengeance, will certainly gather together, certainly find out, and severely punish and plague, an impenitent people devoted to destruction. *Where the carcass is* (the body of the Jewish nation) *there will the eagles* (the Roman soldiers) *be gathered together*.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken : 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven :

Our Saviour goes on in figurative expressions to set forth the calamities that should befall the Jewish nation, immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem : *The sun shall be darkened* : that is, all their glory and excellency shall be eclipsed, all their wealth and prosperity shall be laid waste ; the whole government, civil and ecclesiastical, destroyed ; and such marks of misery found upon them, as never were seen upon a people. *By the sign of the Son of man*, the papists will have understood the sign of the cross. Others understand it of those prodigies which were seen a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, which Josephus mentions ; as, namely, a comet in the form of a sword hanging over the city for a year together ; a light in the temple and about the altar, seen at midnight for half an hour ; a cow, led by the priest to be sacrificed, calved a lamb ; a voice heard in the temple, saying, *Abca-*

*mus hinc*, "Let us go hence." Learn hence, God premonishes before he punishes ; he warns a people of destruction often, before he destroys them once.

— And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet ; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Then *shall the tribes mourn* ; that is, then shall the Jews be convinced that their destruction was the punishment of their sin, in rejecting and crucifying Christ ; and accordingly they that pierced him shall behold him, and mourn over him. Thus it was before the destruction of Jerusalem, and thus will it be before the final judgment. They that pierced him shall be brought before him. Lord, how will the sight of a pierced Christ pierce their souls with horror ! they who have not seen a pierced Christ in the sorrows of repentance, shall hereafter see him in the sorrows of despair. To behold Christ with the eye of sense hereafter, will be very dreadful and terrible to all those that have not beheld him with the eye of faith here. *And he shall send his angels with the sound of a trumpet*. Those that apply this to the destruction of Jerusalem, by the *angels* understand the ministers of the gospel, who by the trumpet of the word did bring in believers throughout all Judea, who were saved from that destruction. Those that understand it of the general judgment, take it literally, that Christ at the great day will send forth his holy angels, and gather all his elect to himself with the sound of a trumpet. Probably, as there was an audible sound of a trumpet at the giving of the law, so there shall be the like sound of a trumpet, when Christ shall summon the world to judgment, for transgressing of that law. A joyful sound will this be to the friends of Christ, a doleful, dreadful sound in the ears of his enemies.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig-tree : When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh : 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near,

even at the doors. 34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. 36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Here our blessed Saviour declares two things with reference to his coming. 1. The certainty of the thing itself. 2. The uncertainty of the time. The certainty of his coming he sets forth by the similitude of the *fig-tree*, whose beginning to bud declares the summer at hand. Thus when they should see the fore-mentioned signs, they might conclude the destruction of their city and temple to be *nigh at hand*, and that some then living should see all these predictions certainly fulfilled. What Christ foretells, shall certainly be fulfilled, his word being more firm than the fabric of heaven and earth. Observe, 2. The uncertainty, as to the precise time, when this judgment should come. No angel in heaven nor creature on earth could determine the time, only the glorious persons in the Godhead; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Learn, 1. That all things are not revealed to the angels themselves, but such things only as it concerns them to know, and the wisdom of God thinks fit to reveal. 2. That the precise time of the day of judgment is kept by God as a secret to himself. He will not have us know that hour, to the intent that we may be upon our watch every hour.

37 But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not, until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two *women* shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

In these verses our Saviour declares that

Jerusalem's destruction, and the world's final dissolution at the great day, would be much like the destruction of the old world; and that in two respects: 1. In regard of unexpectedness. 2. In regard of security and sensuality. How sensual and secure was the old world before the flood! *They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.* That is, wholly given up to sensuality and debauchery, and did not know of the flood's coming; that is, did not consider it, *till the flood swept them away.* Thus was it in the destruction of Jerusalem, and so will it be in the end of the world. Learn hence, 1. That as the old world perished by infidelity, security, and sensuality, so will the same sins be prevailing before the destruction of this present world. *As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of man cometh.* 2. That the true reason why sinners are drowned in sensuality, and given over to security, is this, because they do not believe the certainty, or consider the proximity and nearness, of an approaching judgment. The old world knew not of the flood's coming. Strange! when Noah had told them of it an hundred and twenty years together. The meaning is, they did not consider it, and prepare for it. To such as are unprepared for, and unapprehensive of death and judgment, those evils are always sudden, although men be never so often warned of them. But to such as are prepared, death is never sudden, let them die never so suddenly.

42 Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43 But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Here we have the application made by our Saviour of the foregoing doctrine concerning the certainty and suddenness of a future judgment. *Watch therefore* always; not without intermission, but without giving over; that ye may be not only in an habitual but actual readiness for my appearance. Learn hence, That it is the indispensable duty, and ought to be the indefatigable endeavour, of every christian,

to stand upon his watch in a prepared readiness for Christ's appearance, both for his coming to us, and for our going to him. Watch always, *for ye know not the hour when our Lord cometh.*

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

These words may be applied two ways. 1. To all the faithful servants of Christ in general. Thence learn, That for a person to spend and end his days in the service of Christ, and doing his will, gives good assurance of a blessed condition. *Blessed is that servant.* 2. To the ministers of the gospel in special, may these words be applied. And here observe, 1. The character and duty of a gospel-minister: He is the *steward of Christ's household, to give them their meat in due season.* Observe, 2. The qualifications requisite in such stewards, faithfulness and prudence. *Who then is that faithful and wise steward?* Observe, 3. The reward insured to such stewards as answer these qualifications: *Blessed is that servant.* Learn hence, That the ministers of the gospel are in a special sense the stewards of Christ's household. 2. That faithfulness and prudence are the necessary and indispensable qualifications of Christ's stewards. 3. That wherever these qualifications are found, Christ will graciously and abundantly reward them. Our faithfulness must respect God, ourselves, and our flock, and includes our integrity of heart, purity of intention, industry of endeavour, impartiality in our administrations. Prudence appears in the choice of suitable subjects, in the choice of fit language, in exciting our own affections, in order to the moving of our people's. Ministerial prudence will teach us, by the strictness and gravity of our deportment, to maintain our esteem in the consciences of our people. It will assist us to bear reproach, and direct us to give reproof: he that is silent cannot be innocent; reprove we must, or we cannot be faithful; but prudently, or we cannot be successful.

48 But and if that evil servant

shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49 And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Our Lord in these verses describes an unfaithful and negligent steward, and denounces the dreadful sentence of wrath hanging over him. He is described, 1. By the character of infidelity; he believeth not Christ's coming to judgment, though he preaches it to others: he saith in his heart, *My lord delayeth his coming.* 2. He is described by his hatred, envy, and malignity against his fellow-servants, that were more painful and faithful than himself. He begins to smite, at least with the virulence of his tongue, if not the violence of his hand. 3. By his associating with the wicked, and strengthening their hands by his ill example, *He eateth and drinketh with the drunken;* that is, as their associate and fellow-companion. Thus the unfaithful servant is described; next his judgment and sentence is declared. Observe, 2. The tremendous judgment that shall come upon unfaithful stewards. 1. Christ will surprise them in their sin and security, *by coming in an hour when they look not for him.* 2. He will execute temporal vengeance upon them: *He will cut them asunder,* or hew them in pieces, as the Jews did their sacrifices; that is, separate their souls from their bodies by untimely death. Hence some observe, That God seldom suffers slothful, sensual, wicked, and debauched ministers to live out half their days. 3. Christ will punish them with eternal destruction also: *appointing them their portion with hypocrites;* that is, with the worst of sinners, they shall have a double damnation. As the hypocrite has a double tongue, a double heart, and is a double sinner, so shall he undergo a double damnation. Learn hence, That such ministers as neglect the service of God, and the souls of their people; as they are ranked amongst the worst of sinners in this life, so shall they be punished with them in the severest manner in the

next. When Satan destroys the souls of men, he shall answer for it as a murderer only, not as an officer that was intrusted with the care of the soul. But if the steward doth not provide, if the shepherd doth not feed, if the watchman doth not warn, they shall answer not only for the souls that have miscarried, but for an *office neglected*, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully administered. Woe unto us, if at the great day we have distressed souls roaring out their complaints, and howling forth that doleful accusation against us; "Lord! our stewards have defrauded us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our guides have misled us."

## CHAP. XXV.

Our blessed Saviour, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had exhorted all Christians to the great duty of watchfulness, and to be in a posture of readiness against his coming. Which duty he is pleased to inculcate again in this chapter, and accordingly he urges the necessity of it from two eminent parables; the former, *Of the ten virgins* ver. 1. and the latter, *Of a man travelling into a far country*, ver. 14.

**T**HEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

By the *kingdom of heaven* here, is meant the state of the visible church on earth; it cannot be understood of the kingdom of glory, for there are no foolish virgins in that kingdom; nor yet of the invisible kingdom of grace, for therein are no foolish virgins neither. But in the visible church here on earth, there ever has been a mixture of wise and unwise, of saints and hypocrites. *Five of these virgins were wise, and five were foolish.* Where observe, Our Lord's great charity, in supposing and hoping that amongst the professors of the gospel the number of sincere christians is equal with hypocritical professors. *Five were wise and five foolish.* Teaching us, that we should not confine the church of Christ within a narrow compass, nor confine our charity to a few, and think none shall go to heaven but those of our own party and persuasion, but to extend our charity to all christians that hold the foundation with us, and to hope well of them. Lord! let me rather err on the charitable hand, than be found on the censorious and damning side! This is to imitate my Saviour, whose charity supposed as many wise as

foolish virgins, as many saints as hypocrites in the church. All these virgins are said to *take their lamps and go forth to meet the bridegroom.* For understanding which, we must know that our Saviour alludes to the ancient custom of marriages, which were celebrated in the night; when usually ten young men attended the bridegroom, and as many virgins attended the bride, with lamps in their hands; the bridegroom leading home his bride by the light of those lamps. By these virgins are shadowed forth the professors of christianity. The *foolish virgins* are such as satisfy themselves with a bare profession, without bringing forth fruits answerable thereunto. The *wise virgins* are such as walked answerably to their profession, persevered and continued steadfast therein, and abounded in the graces and virtues of a good life. They are called *wise virgins* for the purity of their faith, for the purity of their worship, and for the purity of their conversations.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

By the *lamps* are meant an outward profession of faith and holiness. By the *oil in the lamps*, is to be understood that solemn profession of repentance and faith, which all christians make in baptism. By *oil in their vessels* is meant the sanctifying and saving graces of the Holy Spirit; the growth and improvement of them, with constancy and perseverance in them. Observe here, wherein the wise and foolish virgins agreed, and wherein they differed: they agreed thus far, that both took their lamps, both lighted them, they both had oil in their lamps; the difference was not that the wise had oil, and the foolish had none; but in this, that the wise took care for a future supply of oil to feed their lamps, when the first oil was spent. Some professors, like foolish virgins, content themselves with a blazing lamp of an outward profession, without concerning themselves to secure an inward principle of grace and love, which should maintain that profession, as the oil maintains the lamp. As the lamp will not long hold burning without a stock of oil to feed it; so a profession of religion, though never so glorious, will not be lasting nor persevering, without a principle of faith and love in

the heart to support and maintain it. Learn hence, That the true wisdom of a christian consists in this, to take care, that not only the lamp of his life may shine by outward profession, but that the vessel of his heart may be furnished with the graces of the Holy Spirit, as a prevailing and abiding principle.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

That is, whilst Christ delays his coming to persons by death and judgment, they are not so diligent as they ought, to prepare themselves for death and judgment. Instead of being upon their watch and guard, *they slumbered and slept.* Note, That not only visible professors, but the holiest and best of christians, are very prone to spiritual slumber. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Spiritual slumber consists in this: when graces are not lively and kept in exercise, particularly faith, hope, and love; when there is an abatement of our love and zeal, an intermission of our care and watchfulness; this is a degree of spiritual slumber: yet the saints' slumber is not a prevailing slumber; it is not an universal slumber, it is not in all the faculties of the soul; if there be deadness in the affections, yet there is no searedness in the conscience. *I sleep,* says the church, *but my heart awaketh,* Cant. v. 2. Still there is a principle in the soul which takes God's part, and the christian groans under the burden of his dull and drowsy state. But the greatest wisdom is, to maintain a constant watch, that we may at no time be surprised by the bridegroom's coming, or be in a confusion when death and judgment shall overtake us. Blessed are those virgins whose lamps always burn bright!

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

*At midnight,* that is, at the most dismal and unseasonable time, when all the virgins were fast asleep; and, when awakened in great affrightment, could not on a sudden consider what to do. Such is the case of those who put off their repentance and preparation for another world, till they are surprised by death and judgment. Lord, how will the midnight cry of the Bridegroom's coming terrify and amaze the unprepared soul! What a

surprising word will this be, *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!* Learn hence, That the Bridegroom will certainly come, though at his own time; and then all shall be called upon, both prepared and unprepared, to go forth to meet him. Reason says he may come, because there is a just God, that will render to every one according to his deeds, and reward both body and soul for all the services they have done for God. The body shall not always remain like a solitary widow in the dust, but shall meet its old companion, the soul, again. And as reason says he *may* come, faith says he *will* come, and argues from the promise of Christ, *John* xiv. 3. and from the purchase of Christ from Christ's affection to us, and from our affection to him: faith has seen him upon the cross, and determines she shall see him in the clouds. The Bridegroom will certainly come at his own time: happy they that are ready to go forth to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

The virgins' arising and trimming their lamps, doth denote, their actual preparation for Christ's coming and appearance, and their putting themselves into a posture of readiness to receive him. Thence learn, That a believing apprehension of the certainty and suddenness of our Lord's coming and approach will rouse us out of our spiritual slumber, and prepare us to meet him with joy and assurance. *Then they arose, and trimmed their lamps.* And the foolish said to the wise, *Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.* Observe here, 1. A request made, *Give us of your oil.* There is a time when the neglecters of grace will be made sensible of the worth of grace by the want of it. Such as now undervalue, yea, vilify the grace of God, will be heard to say, *O give us of your oil.* Observe, 2. The reason of the request, *For our lamps are gone out.* Thence learn, That the lamp of profession will certainly go out, which has not a stock of grace to feed and maintain it.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather

to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

Observe here, 1. The wise virgins' denial, *Not so*; they will part with no oil. Learn hence, That it must be the care of every one to get grace of his own, otherwise the grace of others will do him no good. It is not what others have done, nay, not what Christ himself has done, that will save us, without our own endeavours. Observe, 2. The reason of their denial, *Least there be not enough for us and you*. Thence note, That such christians as have most grace, or the largest stock of grace, have none to spare; none to spare in regard of their occasions for grace on earth, and in regard of their expectations of glory in heaven. Observe, 3. The advice and counsel given; *Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves*. Some take this for an exhortation, others for a mocking derision. *Go to them that sell*: That is, say some, to the shop of the ordinances, where it may be had. Thence note, That such as would have grace, must have timely recourse to the ordinances and means of grace: *Go to them, and buy*. Others understand the words ironically, and as spoken by way of derision, *Go to them that sell*, if you know where to find them, and either buy or borrow for yourselves. Learn thence, That it is the greatest folly in the world to have oil to buy, when we should have oil to burn; to have our grace to seek, when we should have it to exert and exercise. It is no time to get grace when the Bridegroom is come, and the day of grace is past and over.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Observe here, 1. Christ will come at the great day to his people as a Bridegroom, and to the wicked as a Judge. The relation now begun betwixt Christ and his church shall then be publicly solemnized. Observe, 2. The qualifications of the persons, who shall enter with the Bridegroom into heaven: *Such as were ready went in with him*. The readiness is two-fold, habitual and actual; habitual readiness consists in the state of the persons, justified and pardoned; in the frame of the heart, sanctified and renewed; and in the course of life, universally and perseveringly holy

and righteous, consists our actual preparation. Observe, 3. The doleful condition of such as were unready: the door is shut against them: the door of repentance, the door of hope, the door of salvation, all shut, eternally shut, and by him that *shutteth and none can open*. Learn hence, The utter impossibility of ever getting our condition altered by us, when the day of grace and salvation is once over with us. Woe to such souls, who, by the folly of their own delays, have caused the door of conversion and remission to be everlastingly shut against their own souls.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Observe here, The virgins' petition, and the Bridegroom's reply: the petition, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Learn hence, That how negligent soever men are of heaven and salvation here, there are none but will desire it earnestly and importunately hereafter; *Afterward*; that is, when too late. Observe farther, the Bridegroom's reply, *I know you not*; that is, I own and approve you not. There is a two-fold knowledge that Christ has, a knowledge of simple intuition, and a knowledge of special approbation; the former knowledge Christ has of all men, the latter only of good men. Learn hence, That it will be a dreadful misery for any persons, but especially for such as have been eminent professors, to be disowned by Christ at his coming, to hear that dreadful word from the mouth of Christ, *Verily, I know you not*.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Here we have our Lord's application of the foregoing parable, to be always upon our watch, continually upon our guard, to meet the Bridegroom in death and judgment, because we know not the time of his coming and approach. Learn hence, That watchfulness and a prepared readiness is a great duty that lies upon all those who believe and look for Christ's coming and appearance. Happy souls! who are found in a posture of readiness at the Bridegroom's approach, standing, with *lamps trimmed, loins girded, lights burning*! that is, improving and exercising their graces, abounding in all the fruits of



the Spirit, and in all the substantial virtues of a good life: such, and only such, shall have an entrance abundantly administered unto them into the everlasting kingdom.

14 *For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.* 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straight-way took his journey.

Observe here, the person intrusting, Christ; the persons intrusted, all christians; the talents they are intrusted with, goods; that is, goods of providence, riches and honours; gifts of mind, wisdom, parts and learning; gifts of grace: all these goods Christ dispenses variously; more to some, fewer to others, but with expectation of improvement from all. Learn, 1. That Christ is the great Lord of the universe, and Owner of all his servants' goods and talents. That every talent is given us by our Lord to improve and employ for our Master's use and service. 3. That it pleases the Lord to dispense his gifts variously among his servants; to some he commits more, to others fewer talents. 4. That to this Lord of ours every one of us must be accountable and responsible for every talent committed to us, and intrusted with us.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents. 17 And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

The former verses gave an account of the lord's distribution; these acquaint us with the servants' negotiation. Some traded with, and made improvement of, their talents, others traded not at all; yet it is not said, they did embezzle their talent, but not improve it. Learn, It is not sufficient to justify us, that we do not abuse our talents; it is fault enough to hide them, and not improve them; the slothful servant shall no more escape punishment than the wasteful servant.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou good and faithful servant*: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Note here, 1. That the wisdom of God dispenses his gifts and graces variously, as so many talents to his servants, to be employed and improved for his own glory, and his church's good. 2. That all such servants as have received any talents, must look to reckon and account for them: that this account must be particular, personal, exact, and impartial. 3. That all such servants as have been faithful in improving their talents, at Christ's coming shall be both commended and rewarded also. *Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* Where observe, 1. That the state of the blessed is a state of joy. 2. That the joy which the blessed partake of, is the joy of their Lord; that is, the joy which he provides, and which he possesses. 3. That the way after which the saints partake of this joy, is *by entering into it*, which denotes the highest and the fullest participation of it. The joy is too great to enter into them, they must enter into that: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

24 Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not

sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed : 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo, *there* thou hast *that* is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed : 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Observe here, 1. That he that received but one talent, is called to an account as well as he that received five. Heathens that have but one talent, namely, the light of nature, must give an account for that one talent, as well as christians that have five must account for five. Observe, 2. The slothful servant's allegation; *I knew thee to be an hard man, and I was afraid.* Where note, His prejudice against his master, and the effect of that prejudice, *he was afraid* ; and the fruit of his fear, *he hid his talent in the earth.* Learn hence, That sinners entertain in their minds very hard and unkind thoughts of God ; they look upon him as a hard Master, rigorous in his commands, and difficult to be pleased. Learn, 2. That such hard thoughts of God do naturally occasion slavish fear, which is a great hinderance to the faithful discharge of our duty to God. Observe, 3. The master's reply to the slothful servant's allegation, which contains an exprobaton, or upbraiding of him for his sloth and negligence; *Thou wicked and slothful servant.* Where note, 1. That the slothful servant is a wicked servant, as well as the unfaithful servant. 2. The wicked and slothful servants, to excuse themselves, will not stick to charge their miscarriages upon God himself: *Thou wert an hard man.* 3. That no excuses whatsoever shall serve either the slothful or unfaithful servant at the bar of Christ.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance ; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness : there

shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

These words contain the sentence denounced by Christ upon the slothful servant : his punishment is first a punishment of loss : *Take ye the talent from him.* Learn hence, That not improving the gifts of God given as talents to us, provokes God to take them from us, as well as misimproving. *From him that hath not ;* that is, from him that improveth not, *shall be taken that which he hath.* 2. Follows the punishment of sense : *Cast him into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Learn thence, That hell is a place and state of inexpressible misery and torment ; a dismal place, as being deprived of the sight and enjoyment of God, of Christ, of saints, and of angels ; a doleful place, full of overwhelming sorrow and despairing grief. *The gnashing of their teeth,* signifies their being full of rage and indignation against God, against the saints, and against themselves.

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats. 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

From hence to the end of the chapter, we have a draught and scheme of the general judgment. Where observe, The person judging, *the Son of man* ; the persons judged, *good and bad* ; the one called *sheep*, for their innocence and meekness ; the other *goats*, for their unruhiness and uncleanness. Observe also, The manner of his coming to judgment, most august and glorious : glorious in his person, glorious in his attendance. Learn, That Christ's appearance at the great day to the judging of the world, will be a splendid and a glorious appearance : *He will come with power, and in great glory,* in regard of the dignity of his person, and the quality of his office, and the greatness of his work. He will appear as a king in the midst of his nobles, to take off the scandal and ignominy of the cross, and as a recompense for his abasement and humiliation, to strike

the hearts of his enemies with dread and fear, and to fill the souls of his people with joy and confidence. Let us therefore propound it to our faith, to believe it; to our fear, to tremble at the thoughts of it; to our hope and love, that we may expect and wait, look and long for it. Observe farther, The work of this Judge: he shall first *gather all nations*. Learn, That at the general judgment all that have lived shall be summoned to the bar of Christ: persons of all sects, of all ages, of all nations, of all conditions; having gathered them together; he shall next *separate them, as a shepherd his sheep*. Thence learn, That though there be a mixture and confusion of the godly and the wicked here, yet at the day of judgment there will be a separation made betwixt them, and they shall never come together more.

34 Then shall the King say unto his right hand, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

Here follows the sentence which Christ will pronounce upon the righteous and the wicked at the great day: first the sentence of absolution upon the righteous; then the sentence of condemnation upon the wicked. Learn thence, That at the day of judgment the godly shall be absolved before the wicked are condemned. The reasons are, because it is more delightful to God to reward than to punish, to save than to destroy; because it is suitable to Christ's love to begin with his saints, and to be admired by them: also to put his saints out of fear, as to their eternal condition, and to bring them near to himself, and to set them upon the throne with himself, as assessors and judges of the wicked world, 1 Cor. vi. 3. *Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?* Lastly, With respect to the wicked, that they may be the more affected with their loss, and have a vexatious and tormenting sense of that happiness which they have refused. Observe next, The joyful sentence pronounced, *Come ye blessed of my Father*. Where note, 1. The joyful compellation, *Ye blessed*. Which term is opposed to these two things: 1. To the world's judgment of them, which accounts them vile and accursed. Here is an absolution from their unjust censures. 2. To the sentence of the law, which pronounces

all its transgressors accursed, Gal. iii. 19. But, says Christ; I, that have redeemed you from the curse of the law, pronounced you *blessed*. But why *blessed of my Father*? 1. To point out the fontal cause of all our happiness, the love of the Father; *this prepared the kingdom*. 2. This expression shows how the divine Persons glorify one another. As the Spirit glorifies the Son, so the Son glorifies the Father, and refers all to him. Therefore Christ says not, *Come, my redeemed ones*; but, *Come, ye blessed ones*: not, *Come, you that were redeemed by me*; but, *Come, ye blessed of my Father: it is his good pleasure to give you the kingdom*. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ at his second coming will adjudge all his people into a state of glorious and everlasting happiness, which his Father has prepared, and himself has purchased, for them. *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you*.

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Here our Saviour sets forth, not the meritorious cause of his saints' happiness, but the infallible signs of such as should inherit that happiness, the character of the persons that might expect it. Such as fed him, clothed and visited him, in his members. Where note, 1. That the godly having their sins forgiven in this world, some would gather that there should no mention be made of them in the day of judgment. For they observe, that Christ here only mentions the good works of his saints: *ye fed me, ye clothed me*, not a word of their failings. Observe, 2. That they are not the duties of the first, but of the second table, which here Christ mentions, because works of charity are more visible to the world than works of piety. Learn hence, 1. That at the great day every man's sentence shall be pronounced according to his works. 2. That works of charity done out of love to Christ, shall be particularly observed, and bountifully rewarded, by Christ at the great day. The question then will be, not only how have you heard, prayed, or preached, but whom have you fed, clothed, and visited. 3. That whatever good or evil is done to

the poor members of Christ, Christ reckons it as done unto himself, *I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat.* Christ personal is not the object of our pity and charity, but Christ mystical is exposed to want and necessity; he feels hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, in his members, and is refreshed and comforted in their refreshments and comforts. He takes it as a courtesy, who might demand it by authority. How can we be close-handed or hard-hearted to the necessitous Christians, did we steadily believe that in administering to them, we minister refreshments to Christ himself, who parted with the glory of heaven, yea, with his heart's blood, for us?

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Here we have a dialogue or interchangeable discourse betwixt Christ and his faithful servants at the great day. Where observe, Their question and his reply. Their question, *Lord, when did we feed thee, clothe, or visit thee?* We have forgot the time, though such is thy goodness to remember it. Learn thence, That Christ keeps a faithful record of all our acts of pious charity, when we have forgotten them. If we remember to do good, Christ will be sure to remember the good we have done; aye, and reward it as well as remember it. Again, this question of theirs may proceed from admiration and wonder, and from an humble sense of their own nothingness, and from the greatness of Christ's condescension, in taking notice of such mean services, and requiting them with such a transcendent reward. Learn hence, That when Christ comes to reward his children and people, they will wonder and be astonished at the poverty and meanness of their own services, and at the transcendancy and greatness of his rewards. Observe next, Our Lord's reply. *In as much as ye did it to the least*

*of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.* Where observe, 1. The title put by Jesus Christ upon his poorest and meanest members, *My brethren.* 2. The resentment of the kindness showed to his brethren, *as shown unto himself; In as much as ye did it to them, ye have done it to me.* Learn thence, That such is the endearing intimacy between Christ and his members, that whatsoever is done to any of them, is esteemed by him as done unto himself.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;

Here we have the sentence of condemnation denounced against the wicked. Where observe, 1. The posture in which they are found; *at Christ's left hand.* This doth not so much denote the ignominy of the place (though placing at the left hand is less honourable) as the impiety of their choice; they took up with left-handed mercies, the mercies of the footstool, wealth and riches, dignity and honour. As for the good things *which are at God's right hand for evermore*, they never sought after these. Verily a man may know his future state by his present choice. Observe, 2. The title given to wicked men, *Ye cursed.* Not cursed of my Father, because cursing is God's strange work; we force him to it, he delights not in it. Observe, 3. The sentence itself. Where note, 1. The punishment of loss, *Depart from me.* Learn thence, 1. That it is the hell of hell to the damned, that they must everlastingly depart from, and lose the comfortable fruition and enjoyment of, God in Christ: it is to be deprived of an infinite good. Hell is a deep dungeon, where the sunshine of God's presence never cometh. 2. The punishment of sense, *Depart into everlasting fire.* Where note, its severity, it is *fire*: its eternity, it is *everlasting fire.* Learn thence, That there are everlasting torments in hell prepared for the wicked; there is a state of torment, and a place of torment, provided by God. All princes have not only their palace, but their prison. God has the palace of heaven, for the enjoyment of himself and his friends; and the prison of hell, for punishing his enemies. The nature of the damned's misery is set out by fire; the whole man, body and soul, shall be tormented in it. 1. The body in all its members, their eyes with affrighted spectacles, *the devil and his angels*, and their old com-

panions in sin: every time they behold these, it revives their guilt, and enrages their despair. Their ears are filled with yellings and howlings, and hideous outcries. 2. The soul shall suffer in hell, by reflecting upon its own choice, by remembering time sinfully wasted, seasons of grace sadly slighted, the mercies of God unworthily abused. Lord! how will the remembrance of past mercies aggravate present miseries! Note farther, 1. That Christ saith not of the punishment, as he doth of the blessing, that it was *prepared from the beginning of the world*, lest it should be thought that God designed men's punishment before they sinned. Note 2. That although Christ saith, *Come, ye blessed of my Father*, he saith not, *Go, ye cursed of my Father*, because God is the Author and Procurer of men's happiness, but man only is the author of his own misery. Note, 3. That Christ speaks of this eternal misery by fire, as designed originally not for man, but for the devil and his angels; but man, by giving up himself to the power and thralldom of sin and Satan, and working himself down to the infernal regions, becomes like unto him in torments, whom he so much resembled in manners and qualities.

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

Observe here, 1. How Christ lays the charge of the wicked's damnation upon themselves alone, *Ye gave me no meat, ye took me not in*: man, and man alone, is the cause of his own destruction and damnation. Observe, 2. The kind of sin charged on the wicked at the great day. Consider it, 1. In general, it is a sin of omission. Whence learn, That sins of omission are certainly damning as well as sins of commission, or want of love to Christ and his members. Learn thence, That one reign-

ing sin, one prevailing corruption, is enough to damn a person, because it deprives a man of the grace of the gospel, and excludes him from all the benefit of the promises. Note lastly, If such as do not give to Christ in his members shall be miserable at the great day, what will the condition of them be that take from them, who strip and starve them, who persecute and hate them, who imprison or banish them? If the uncharitable shall scarcely be saved, yea, shall certainly be damned, where shall the unmerciful and cruel appear?

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

Observe here, 1. That though the righteous are first judged, yet the sentence is first executed on the wicked. *They shall go into everlasting punishment*. Observe, 2. That men's states and conditions in another world will be different, as their ways and doings have been in this world. 3. That everlasting life shall be the portion of the godly, and everlasting punishment the portion of the wicked. God grant that the horrors of eternal darkness, and the dismal thoughts of a miserable eternity, may effectually discourage every one of us from a wicked and impenitent course of life! *For who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?*

#### CHAP. XXVI.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, 2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. 3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. 5 But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

Several things are here observable; as, 1. The persons conspiring against our blessed Redeemer's life, namely, *chief priests, and scribes, and elders*, that is, the whole sanhedrim, or general council of the Jewish church: these lay their malicious heads to-

gether, to contrive the destruction of the innocent Jesus. Here was a general council of them, consisting of priests, doctors, and elders, with the high-priest their president, yet erring in a point of doctrine concerning the Messiah, not believing Jesus to be the Son of God, notwithstanding all the convincing miracles which he had wrought before them. Observe, 2. The manner of this conspiracy against our Saviour's life; it was clandestine, secret, and subtle: *They consulted how they might take him by subtilty and kill him.* Learn hence, That Satan makes use of the subtilty of crafty men, and abuseth their parts as well as their power, for his own purposes. Satan never sends a fool on his errand. Observe, 3. The time when this conspiracy was managed; *at the time of the passover.* Indeed at first the chief priests did not incline to that time, *fearing a tumult and uproar among the people;* but Judas presenting them with a fair opportunity to apprehend him, they changed their purpose, and accordingly at the feast of the passover our Saviour suffered. This was not without a mystery, that Christ, the true Lamb of God, whom the paschal lamb typified and represented, should be offered up *at the feast of the passover;* signifying thereby, that he was the true paschal Lamb, and that the legal shadow ought to cease in the exhibition of him. Learn hence, That not only the death of Christ in general, but all the circumstances relating to it, were fore-ordained of God himself; as, the place where, at *Jerusalem;* the time when, *at the time of the passover;* that time did God devise best for this Lamb to be a sacrifice.

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he sat at meat.

This woman St. John says was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who, to show her love to Christ, and put honour upon him, took a precious box of ointment, and poured it upon our Saviour's head, according to the custom of the eastern countries, who used so to do at their feasts and banquets; to which David alludes, *Psal. xlii. 5.* Learn hence, 1. That where true love to Christ prevails in the heart, nothing is adjudged too dear for Christ. This box of ointment

murmuring Judas valued at three hundred pence; which, reckoning the Roman penny at seven pence halfpenny, makes of our money nine pounds seven shillings and sixpence. Love (we see) spares no cost; but where the esteem of Christ is high, the affection will be strong. Note, 2. That where strong love prevails towards Jesus Christ, it suffers not itself to be outshined by any examples. The weakest woman that strongly loves Jesus Christ, will piously strive with the greatest apostle to express the fervour of her love unto him. I do not find any of the apostles at so much cost to put honour upon Christ, as this poor woman was at. Love knows no bounds, no measures.

8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? 9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

That is, when Judas, and some other disciples whom he had influenced, saw this action, they murmured: particularly Judas blamed this holy woman for needless prodigality, and did tacitly reflect upon Christ himself, for suffering that wasteful expense. O! how doth a covetous heart think every thing too good for Christ: he that sees a pious action well done, and seeks to undervalue it, shows himself possessed with a spirit of envy. Judas's invidious spirit makes him censure an action which Christ highly approved. Learn thence, That men who know not our hearts, may, through ignorance or prejudice, censure and condemn those actions which God doth commend and will graciously reward. Happy for this poor woman, that she had a more righteous Judge to pass sentence upon her action than wicked Judas!

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. 11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. 12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

Observe here, How readily our Lord vindicates this good woman: she says nothing for herself, nor need she, having such an Advocate. 1. Christ rebukes Judas, *Why trouble ye the woman?* Plainly

intimating, that it is no small trouble to a gracious spirit, to find their good work misinterpreted and misrepresented: next, he defends the action, calling it a good work; because done out of a principle of love to Christ: *She hath wrought a good work upon me.* And lastly, He gives the reason of her action: *She did it for my burial.* As kings and great persons were wont, in those eastern countries, at their funerals to be embalmed with odours and sweet perfumes; so, says our Saviour, this woman, to declare her faith in me as her King and Lord, doth with this box of ointment, as it were beforehand, embalm my body for its burial. True faith puts honour upon a crucified, as well as a glorified, Saviour. This holy woman accounts Christ worthy of all honour in his death, believing it would be a sweet-smelling sacrifice unto God, and the savour of life unto his people. Observe farther, from these words, *But me ye have not always*, the doctrine of transubstantiation is overthrown; for if Christ be, as to soul, body, and divinity, perpetually present in the host among those of the church of Rome, then have they Christ always with them: contrary to what our Saviour here declares; though his poor members would be always present with them, yet he himself should not be so: *The poor ye have always, but me ye have not always.*

13 Verily I say unto you, Where-soever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

Our Saviour having defended this holy woman from the calumny of Judas in the foregoing verses, in this he declares, that she should be rewarded with an honourable memorial in all ages of the church: *Wheresoever this gospel is preached, this shall be spoken of her.* O what care doth Christ take to have the good deeds of his children not buried in the dust with them, but be had in *everlasting remembrance.* Though sin causes men to rot above ground, to stink alive, and, when they are dead, leave an inglorious memory upon their graves; yet will the actions of the just smell sweet, and blossom in the dust. Learn hence, That we may laudably prosecute that which will procure us a good name, and spread our reputation to future ages.

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, 15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Observe here, 1. The person betraying our blessed Redeemer, *Judas*: Judas, a professor; Judas, a preacher; Judas, an apostle, and *one of the twelve* whom Christ had chosen out of the world to be his dearest friends, and his own family and household. Shall we wonder to find friends unfriendly and unfaithful towards us, when our Saviour had a traitor in his own house? Observe, 2. The heinousness of his sin in betraying Christ: he betrayed Christ Jesus, a Man; Christ Jesus, his Master; Christ Jesus, his Maker; the first was murder, the second treason. Learn thence, That it is no strange or uncommon thing for the vilest of sins, and most horrid impieties, to be acted by such persons as make the most eminent profession of holiness and religion. Observe, 3. What was the sin occasioning and leading Judas to the committing of this horrid sin; it was covetousness. I do not find that Judas had any particular malice against Christ's person, but a base and unworthy spirit of covetousness possessed him; this made him sell his Master. Covetousness is a root-sin; an inordinate desire and love of riches, an eager and unsatiable thirst after the world, is the parent of the most monstrous and unnatural sins: Therefore remember we our Saviour's caution, *Luke xii. 15. Take heed and beware of covetousness*; he doubles the caution, to show us both the great danger of the sin, and the great care we ought to take to preserve ourselves from it. Observe, 4. How small a sum tempted the covetous mind of Judas to betray his Master, *thirty pieces of silver*; which amounted but to three pounds fifteen shillings of our money. This was the price of a slave or common servant, *Erod. xxi.* As Christ took upon him the form of a servant, so his life was valued at the rate of an ordinary servant's life. It may seem a wonder, that the high-priests should offer no more for the life of our Saviour, and that Judas should accept so little; seeing that his covetousness was

so great, and their rage so grievous, how comes it to pass that he demands so little; and that they offer no more? Had the reward been proportioned to the greatness of their malice, it had been thirty thousand rather than thirty pieces of silver. But the scripture must be fulfilled; accordingly the wisdom of God overruled this matter, for fulfilling that prophecy, *Zech. xi. 12. They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.* Let not any christian be concerned that he is despised and undervalued; he can never meet with so great a reproach, so low an abasement, for Christ, as Christ underwent for him. Observe, lastly, Judas's folly, as well as treachery; he that might have demanded what he pleased for this purchase, *He says unto the chief priests, What will ye give me?* As if he had said, "I am resolved to sell him at any rate, give me what you will for him." Nay, farther, Judas covenanted, and they promised, but whether it was now paid, appeareth not. Learn, That such a person as has a vile and base esteem of Jesus Christ, will part with him upon any terms. The bare expectation of a few shekels of silver, will make such a one willing to part with a pearl of great price. Wonder not then to see some persons selling their country, their friends, their God, and their religion, for money. Judas did so before them.

17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? 18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. 19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

The time for the celebration of the passover being now at hand, Christ sends two of his disciples to Jerusalem, to prepare things necessary in order thereunto: accordingly they enter the city, and find the master of an house, whose heart Christ, by his divine power, had so inclined, that he willingly accommodated them upon this occasion. Our blessed Saviour had not a lamb of his own, and possibly no

money in his purse to buy one, but he finds as excellent accommodations in this poor man's house, as if he had dwelt in Ahab's ivory palace, and had had the provisions of Solomon's table. Learn hence, That Christ has such an influence upon, and command over, the spirits of men, that he can incline them to do what service soever he pleaseth for him. When Christ has a passover to celebrate, he will prepare an house, and dispose the heart to a free reception of himself. Learn, 2. That Christ, being under the law, observes and keeps the law of the passover. Thus he fulfilled all righteousness; and although the ceremonial law was to receive its abolishment in the death of Christ, yet all the time of his life he punctually observes it.

20 Now, when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

Observe here, The impudent forehead of this bold traitor, Judas, who presumed, as soon as he had sold his Master, to sit down at the table with him, and partake with the other disciples of the solemn ordinance of the passover: had the presence of Judas polluted the ordinance to any beside himself, doubtless our Saviour would never have permitted this bold intrusion. Learn hence, 1. That nothing is more ordinary than for unholy persons presumptuously to rush in upon the solemn ordinances of God, which they have no right, whilst such, to partake of. 2. That the presence of such persons pollutes the ordinances only to themselves; holy persons are not polluted by the sins of such: *for to the pure all things are pure.*

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

What an astonishing word was this! "One of you my disciples shall betray me." Can any church on earth expect purity in all its members, when Christ's own family of twelve had a traitor and a devil in it? Yet though it was very sad to hear that one should betray him, it was matter of joy that it was but one; one hypocrite in a congregation is too much, but there is cause of rejoicing if there be no more. But why did not Christ name Judas, and say, "Thou art he that shall betray me?" Doubtless to draw him to repentance, and to prevent giving Judas any provocation. Lord, how sad it is for such as pretend friendship to Christ, and



call themselves of his family and acquaintance, *who eat of his bread, and yet lift up the heel against him!*

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

Observe here, 1. The disciples' sorrow, and next, the effect of that sorrow. Their sorrow was (as well it might) exceeding great. Well might innocent disciples be overwhelmed with sorrow, to hear that their Master should die; that he should die by treason; that the traitor should be one of themselves. 2. But though their sorrow was great, yet was the effect of their sorrow very good; it wrought in them a holy suspicion of themselves, and caused every one to search himself, and say, *Master, is it I?* Thence learn, That it is possible for such secret wickedness to lurk in our hearts as we never suspected, which time and temptation may draw forth in such a manner as we could not believe: and therefore it is both wise and holy to suspect ourselves, and to be often saying, *Lord, is it I?* There is no better preservative from sin, than to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy. Observe farther, That though the disciples' fear and sorrow made them jealous and suspicious, yet was it of themselves, not of one another, nay, not of Judas himself: every one said, *Master, is it I?* Not, *Master, is it Judas?* Learn hence, That true sincerity and christian charity will make us more suspicious of ourselves than of any other person whatsoever; it always hopes the best of others, and fears the worst concerning ourselves.

23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. 24 The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. 25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

Here our Saviour acquaints his disciples who it was that had designed his death, even he that dipped with him in the dish, or he to whom he gave the sop. Observe, The traitor, whom Christ less loved, he has the sop given to him; the other disciples,

whom Christ loved better, had no such particular boon. Outward good things are not always given to the children of men in love, but are sometimes bestowed in displeasure; there is no measuring Christ's affections by temporal blessings, no concluding either love or hatred by these things. Observe farther, How Judas could sit still and hear the threats of judgment denounced against himself without concern; he hears Christ say, *Woe to the man by whom the Son of man is betrayed*, and is no more blanked than innocence itself: resolved sinners run on desperately in their wicked courses, and with open eyes see and meet their own destruction; and are neither dismayed at it, nor concerned about it. Observe farther, That this shameless man had the impudence to say to Christ, *Master, is it I?* Our Saviour gives him a direct affirmation, *Thou hast said*. Did Judas, think ye, blush, and cast down his guilty eyes, and let fall his drooping head, at so galling an intimation? Nothing less. Lord, how does obduracy in sin steel the brow, and make it incapable of all relenting impressions! Observe lastly, How Christ prefers nonentity before damnation. *It had been better for that man if he had never been born*. A temporal miserable being is not worse than no being, but an eternal miserable being is worse than no being at all; eternal misery is much worse than nonentity. *It had been better for Judas if he had never been born*, than to commit such a sin, and lie under such wrath, and that everlasting. O, better to have no being, than not to have a being in Christ.

26 And, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. 30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Immediately after the celebration of the

passover, follows the institution of the Lord's supper. In which observe, 1. The Author of this new sacrament, *Jesus took bread*. Note thence, That to institute a sacrament is Christ's sole prerogative; it is the church's duty to celebrate the sacraments, but she has power to make none. This belongs only to Christ. Observe, 2. The time of the institution, the night before his passion. *The night before he was betrayed, Jesus took bread*. Learn thence, That it is very necessary, when sufferings are approaching, to have recourse to the table of the Lord, which affords both an antidote against fear, and is restorative to faith. Observe here, 3. The sacramental elements, *bread and wine*; *bread* representing his body; and *wine* his blood. Observe, 4. The ministerial actions, *the breaking of the bread, and the blessing of the cup*. As to the bread, *Jesus took it*; that is, set it apart from common use, and separated it for holy ends and purposes. *He blessed it*; that is, prayed for a blessing upon it; and *brake it*, thereby shadowing forth his body broken upon the cross. And he *gave it to his disciples, saying*, "This broken bread signifies my body suddenly to be broken upon the cross for your redemption and salvation; do this in remembrance of me, and of my death." Thus the scriptures constantly speak in sacramental matters. So circumcision is called *the covenant*, and the lamb *the passover*. In like manner, here, the bread is called *Christ's body*, because instituted to represent to all future ages his body broken. Moreover, how could the disciples think they had eaten Christ's body, when they saw his body whole before them? And besides, to eat human flesh, and drink blood, was not only against the express letter of the law, but abhorred by all mankind. True it is, that the heathens laid it to the christians charge, that they ate human flesh; but falsely, as it appears by the apology made for the primitive christians; which apology had been false, had they daily eaten the flesh of Christ in the sacrament. The very heathens owned it a thing more detestable than death to eat human flesh, and more to eat the God they worship, and to devour him whom they adore. Again, as to the cup; Christ having set it apart by prayer and thanksgiving, he commands his disciples *to drink all of it*; and subjoins a reason for it; for *this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for the remission of sins*; that is, the wine in this cup represents the shedding

of my blood, by which the new covenant betwixt God and man was ratified and confirmed. Whence we learn, That every communicant has as undoubted a right to the cup as to the bread, in the Lord's supper: *Drink ye all of it*, says Christ; therefore to deny the cup to the laity is contrary to the institution of Christ. After the celebration was over, our Saviour and his disciples sang an hymn, as the Jews were wont to do at the passover the six eucharistical psalms, from the 113th to the 119th psalm. Learn hence, How fit it is that God be glorified in his church, by singing of psalms, and in particular, when the sacrament of the Lord's supper is celebrated. *When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives*.

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Here our Saviour acquaints his disciples, that by reason of his approaching sufferings, they should all of them be so exceedingly offended, that they would certainly forsake and leave him; which accordingly came to pass. Learn thence, That Christ's dearest friends forsook him, and left him alone in the midst of his greatest distress and danger. Observe, 2. What was the cause of this their flight, it was the prevalence of their fear. Thence note, How sad it is for the holiest and best of men to be left under the power of their own fears in a day of temptation.

32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Observe here, The wonderful lenity of Christ towards his timorous and fearful disciples; notwithstanding their cowardly flight from him, he tells them he would not forsake them, but love them still; and as an evidence of it, would meet them in Galilee: *I will go before you into Galilee*: there shall you see me. And when they did see him he never upbraided them with their timorousness, but was friends with them, notwithstanding their late cowardice. Christ's love to his disciples is like himself, unchangeable and everlasting. *Having loved his own, he loved them to the end*.

33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

See here what strong purposes and settled resolutions both Peter and all the apostles had, to keep close to Christ; but how did their self-confidence fail them! Learn thence, That self-confidence is a sin, too, too incident to the holiest and best of men. *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.* Good man, he resolved honestly; but too, too much in his own strength. Little, little did he think what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if once God left him to the power and prevalence of his own fears. Observe farther, That the rest of the apostles had the like confidence of their own strength with St Peter. *Likewise also said they all.* Note thence, That the holiest of men know not their own strength till it comes to the trial. Little did these good men imagine what a cowardly spirit they had in them, till temptation put it to the proof.

36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. 37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. 38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. 39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. 40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the

flesh is weak. 42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. 43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. 44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Our blessed Saviour being now come with his disciples into the garden, he falls there into a bitter and bloody agony, in which he prayed with wonderful fervency and importunity to his heavenly Father. His sufferings were now coming on a great pace, and he meets them upon his knees, and would be found in a praying posture. Learn thence, That prayer is the best preparative for, as well as the most powerful support under, the heaviest sufferings that can befall us. As to this prayer of our Saviour's in the garden, many things are very observable. As, 1. The place where he prayed, *in the garden*; but why went Christ thither? Was it to hide or shelter himself from his enemies? Nothing less: for if so, it had been the most improper place, because he was wont to retire thither to pray, John xviii. 2. *Judas knew the place, for Jesus oft-times resorted thither*; so that Christ went thither not to shun, but to prepare himself by prayer to meet, his enemies. Observe, 2. The time when he entered the garden for prayer, it was the evening: here he spent some hours in pouring out his soul to God: for about midnight Judas and the soldiers came and apprehended him in a praying posture. Teaching us by his example, that when imminent dangers are before us, especially when death is apprehended by us, to be very much in prayer to God, and very fervent in our wrestling with him. Observe, 3. The matter of our Lord's prayer, *that if possible the cup might pass from him*; that is, those bitter sufferings which were then before him; particularly the insupportable burden of his Father's wrath. He prays, if possible, that his Father would excuse him from this dreadful wrath, his soul being amazed at it. But what! Did Christ then begin to repent of his undertaking for sinners? Did he shrink and give back when it came to the pinch? No, no; as Christ had two natures, being God and Man, so he had two distinct wills; as Man,

he feared and shunned death; as God-man, he willingly submitted to it; the divine spirit and the human nature of Christ did now assault each other with disagreeing interests, till at last victory was got on the spirit's side. Again, this prayer was not absolute, but conditional: *if it be possible*. Father, if it may be, if thou art willing, if it please thee, *let it pass*: if not, I will drink it. Learn hence, 1. That the cup of sufferings is in itself considered as a very bitter and distasteful cup, which human nature abhors, and cannot but desire and pray may pass from it. 2. That yet oft-times the wisdom of God is pleased to put this bitter cup of affliction into the hands of those whom he doth most sincerely love. 3. That when God doth so, it is their duty to drink it with humble submission, and cheerful resignation. *Not my will, but thine be done*. Observe, 4. The manner how our Lord prayed; and here we shall find it, 1. A solitary prayer; he went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples; he saith unto them, *Tarry ye here, while I go and pray yonder*. Mark, Christ did neither desire his disciples to pray with him, nor to pray for him. No, he must tread the wine-press alone; not but that Christ loved and delighted in his disciples' company; but there were occasions when he thought fit to leave them, and to go alone to God in prayer. Thence learn, That the company of our best friends is not always seasonable. Peter, James, and John, were three good men; but Christ bids them tarry, while he went aside for private prayer. There are times and cases when a christian would not be willing that the dearest friend he has in the world should be with him, or understand and bear what passes betwixt him and his God. 2. This prayer of Christ was an humble prayer; that is evident by the postures into which he cast himself; sometimes *kneeling*, sometimes *lying prostrate upon his face*. He lies in the very dust; lower he cannot fall; and his heart was as low as his body. And such was the fervour of his spirit, that he prayed himself into an agony. O let us blush to think how unlike we are to Christ in prayer, as to our praying frame of spirit! Lord, what drowsiness and deadness! what laziness and dulness! what stupidity and formality, is found in our prayers! how often do our lips move, and our hearts stand still! 3. It was a repeated and reiterated prayer. *He prayed the*

*first, second, and third time*. He returns upon God over and over, plies him again and again, resolving to take no denial. Learn thence, That christians ought not to be discouraged, though they have besought God again and again for a particular mercy, and no answer of prayer has come unto them. Observe also, How our Lord used the same prayer three times over, *saying the same words*. A person then may pray with and by a form of prayer, and yet not pray formally, but in a very acceptable manner unto God. Christ both gave a form of prayer to his disciples, and also used one himself. Observe next, The posture in which our holy Lord found his own disciples, when he was in his agony: *they were sleeping*, when he was praying. O wonderful! that they could sleep at such a time. Hence we gather, that the best of Christ's disciples may be sometimes overtaken with infirmities, with great infirmities, when the most important duties are performing. *He cometh to his disciples and findeth them sleeping*. Observe farther, The gentle reproof he gave the disciples for sleeping: *What! could ye not watch with me one hour?* Could not you watch, when your Master is in such danger? Could not you watch with me, when I am going to deliver up my life for you? What! not one hour, and that the parting hour too? After this reprehension, he subjoins an exhortation: *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*: and superadds a forcible reason, *for though the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak*. Thence learn, That the holiest and best resolved christians, who have willing spirits for Christ and his service, yet in regard of the weakness of the flesh, or the frailty of human nature, it is their duty to watch and pray, and thereby guard themselves against temptations. *Watch and pray,—for though the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak*: though you have sincerely resolved rather to die with me than deny me, yet be assured, that when temptation actually assaults you, when fear and shame, pain and suffering, death and danger, are before you, and present to your sense, the weakness of your flesh will prevail over these resolutions, if you do not watch diligently, and pray fervently for divine assistance.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the

hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise, let us be going ; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. 47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he : hold him fast. 49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master ; and kissed him. 50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come ? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

Our Saviour having poured out his soul in prayer to God in the garden, he is now ready, and waits for the coming of his enemies ; being first in the field : accordingly, *while he yet spake, came Judas, one of the twelve*, and under his conduct a band of soldiers to apprehend him. It was the lot and portion of our blessed Redeemer to be betrayed into the hands of his mortal enemies, by the treachery of a false and dissembling friend. Observe here, The traitor, the treason, the manner how, and the time when, this treasonable design was executed. Observe, 1. The betrayer, *Judas* ; all the evangelists carefully describe him by his name, *Judas*, by his surname, *Iscaiot* ; lest he should be mistaken for Jude, the brother of James. God is tender and careful of the names and reputations of his upright-hearted servants. He is also described by his office, *one of the twelve*. The eminence of his place of station was an high aggravation of his transgression. Nay, in some respect he was preferred above the rest, having a peculiar trust reposed in him ; he bore the bag : that is, he was almoner and steward of Christ's family, to take care for the necessary accommodations of Christ and his apostles ; and yet this man, thus called, thus honoured, thus respectfully treated, by Christ, for the lucre of a little money perfidiously betrays him. O whether will not a bad heart, and a busy devil, carry a man ! Learn hence, 1. That the greatest professors had need be jealous of their own hearts, and look well to the grounds and principles of their profession.

A profession begun in hypocrisy, will certainly end in apostasy. Learn, 2. That persons are never in such imminent danger, as when they meet with temptations exactly suited to their master-lust. Covetousness was Judas's master-sin ; the love of the world made him a slave to Satan, and the devil lays a temptation before him which suits his temper, hits his humour, and it prevails immediately. O pray, pray that ye may be kept from a strong and suitable temptation, a temptation suited to your predominant lust and inclination. Observe, 2. As the betrayer Judas, so the treason itself, with its aggravating circumstances : he led an armed multitude to the place where Christ was, gave them a signal to discover him, and encouraged them to lay hands upon him, and *hold him fast*. This was the hellish design Satan put into his heart, and it has these aggravating circumstances attending it. He had seen the miracles which Christ wrought by the power of God, and could not but know him to be a Divine Person. He could not sin out of ignorance or blind zeal, but the love of money made him do what he did. Farther, what he did was not done by the persuasions of any, but he was a volunteer in this service. The high priest neither sent to him, nor sent for him, but he offers his service, and no doubt they were very much surprised to find one of Christ's own disciples at the head of a conspiracy against him. Learn hence, That no man knows where he shall stop or stand when he first enters the ways of sin ; should any one have told Judas, that his love of money would at last so far prevail upon him, as to make him sell the blood of Jesus Christ, he would have answered, as Hamael did Elisha, *Is thy servant a dog, that I should do this thing ?* Wickedness, like holiness, doth not presently come to its full strength in the soul, but grows up by insensible degrees. Men do not commence masters in the art of villany in an instant ; they begin first with lesser, then with greater sins ; first with secret, then with open sins. Doubtless Judas was an old though secret sinner ; surely he could not immediately attain to such an height of impudence, and so great a degree of stupidity. Hear, ye professors of religion, ye that partake of ordinances, frequent sacraments, take heed of living as Judas did in the allowed commission of any secret sin, to the wasting of your conscience and the destroying of your souls. Observe

3. The manner how this hellish plot was executed; partly by force, and partly by fraud: by force, in that he came *with a multitude armed with swords and staves*: and by fraud; he gives him a kiss, and says, *Hail, Master*. Here was honey in the tongue, and poison in the heart. This treacherous kiss enhanced his crime beyond expression. O vilest of hypocrites, how durst thou approach so near thy Lord in the exercise of so much baseness and ingratitude! But none sin with so much impudence and obstinacy as apostates. Learn we hence, To beware of men: when we see too, too glittering appearances, we may suspect the inside. Charity for others is our duty, but too great confidence may be our snare. There is so much hypocrisy in many, and so much corruption in all, that we must not be too confident. Observe, 4. The time when this treasonable design was executed upon Christ; when he was in the garden with his disciples, exhorting them to prayer and watchfulness, dropping heavenly and most reasonable counsels upon them. *While he yet spake, lo, Judas came, and the multitude with him*. Judas found Christ in the most heavenly and excellent employment, when he came to apprehend him. O how happy is it, when our sufferings find us in God's way, engaged in his service, and engaging his assistance by fervent supplication? Thus did our Lord's sufferings meet him: may they so meet us!

51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear. 52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

The rude multitude laying hands upon Christ, the disciples, who had remitted their watch, do resume their courage, and are willing to rescue their Master if they can; particularly Peter draws his sword, and cuts off the ear of Malchus, one of the

forwardest to lay hold on Jesus. Observe here St. Peter's zeal and sincere love for his Lord and Master: it was in great sincerity spoken, *Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*. But why did not Peter draw his sword upon Judas, rather than Malchus? Perhaps because though Judas was more faulty, yet Malchus was more forward to arrest and carry off our Saviour. How doth a pious breast swell with indignation at the sight of any open affront offered unto Christ! Observe here, That though St. Peter's heart was sincere, yet his hand was rash: good intentions are no warrant for irregular actions; and accordingly Christ, who accepted his affection, reproves him for the action: *put up thy sword; for they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword*. Learn hence, That Christ will thank no man to fight for him without a warrant and commission from him. To resist a lawful magistrate, even in Christ's own defence, is rash zeal, and discountenanced by the gospel. To a lawful power lawfully executed, there must be yielded due obedience. Observe lastly, Our Lord's absolute refusal to be rescued out of his enemies' hands, with the reason of it: "Did I incline to be rescued by force, (as if our Lord had said,) I could demand all the troops of angels in heaven to show themselves upon that occasion; but how can this stand with the decree of my Father, with the declarations of the scripture, with the demonstration of my mercy, and with the salvation of miserable mankind?" Learn thence, That Christ was infinitely more concerned for the salvation of lost sinners, than for his own death and sufferings; more concerned for our eternal salvation, than for his own temporal preservation. Had he been rescued by the power of angels, we had fallen a prey into the paw of devils.

55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. 56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

We had an account of our Lord's apprehension in the former verses; here,

the sad effect of it upon his disciples: *They all forsook him, and fled.* Had this been done by the giddy multitude who followed him for the loaves, it had been no cause of wonder; but for those who had already forsaken all to follow him, who were faithful though fearful friends; what an addition to his sufferings must this be! No doubt but the ingratitude of his friends made deeper wounds in his soul, than the malice of enemies could make in his body. They that said all to Christ, verse 36, *Though we should die with thee, yet we will not deny thee,* do here all of them desert and forsake him; when it came to the push, not a man of them stands by him. Learn thence, That the holiest of men know not their own hearts when great temptations and trials are before them, till they come to grapple with them, and to be engaged in them. We know not our own strength till temptation puts us to the proof.

57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. 58 But Peter followed him afar off, unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants to see the end. 59 Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death: 60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came; yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. 62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 63 But Jesus held his peace.

Judas having made good his promise to the high priest, and delivered Jesus a prisoner into their hands, these wolves of the evening no sooner seize the Lamb of God, but they thirst and long to suck his innocent blood. Yet lest it should look like a downright murder, they will allow him a mock-trial, by abusing the law, and perverting it to injustice and bloodshed; according, they industriously suborn false

witnesses to take away his life, not sticking at the grossest perjury, so they might destroy him. *The chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death.* Abominable wickedness! innocence itself cannot protect from slander and false accusation. No man is so innocent or good whom false witness may not condemn. Yet observe farther, our Lord's meekness and patience, his submissive silence under all these wicked suggestions and false accusations; *Jesus held his peace,* verse 63. Guilt is clamorous and impatient; innocence is silent, and careless of misreports. Learn hence, That to bear the revilings, contradictions, and false accusations of men, with a silent and submissive spirit, is an excellent and Christ-like temper. Our Lord stood before his unjust judges and false accusers, as a *sheep before his shearers, dumb, and not opening his mouth.* Although a trial for his life was managed most maliciously and illegally against him, *when he was reviled, he reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* O let the same humble mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus.

—And the high priest answered and said unto him; I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. 64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. 66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. 67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, 68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?

We observed even now that our Lord was silent, and did make no reply to the false witnesses that evidenced against him

at his trial; because being so manifestly contradictory, they did fall to the ground of themselves. But now when the question was solemnly put by the high priest, *Art thou the Christ?* he said, *I am*. Thence learn, That although we are not obliged to answer every cavilling or ensnaring question, yet we are bound faithfully to own and freely to confess the truth, when we are solemnly called thereunto. Christ, who in the former verses was silent, and as a *deaf man heard not*, now witnesses a good confession: teaching us, both by his example and command, to confess and own both him and his truth, when lawfully required; when our silence would be a denying of the truth, a dishonour to God, and a scandal to our brethren. Christ knew that his answer would cost him his life, and yet he durst not but give it. *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* Jesus said, *I am*. Yea, farther observe, That as Christ answered directly and plainly at his trial, so he did not refuse to answer upon oath: *I adjure thee by the living God*, says the judge of the court, *that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ*; that is, I require thee to answer this question upon oath; for adjuring a person, or requiring him to answer upon oath, was the manner of swearing among the Jews. Now to this adjuration our Saviour answered plainly and directly, *I am*, Mark xiv. 61. Hence learn, That swearing before a magistrate, upon a just and great occasion, is lawful: if Christ in the fifth of St. Matthew forbid all oaths, then here his practice was contrary to his own doctrine; but it is evident that Christ answered the magistrate upon oath, and so may we. Observe lastly, The sentence of condemnation which the council passed upon him for owning himself to be the Son of God: *He hath spoken blasphemy*, and is worthy to die. Hereupon the unruly rabble affront him with the vilest abuses, and most horrid indignities; *They spit in his face, they blindfolded him, they smote him with their fists and palms of their hands*; and in the way of contempt and mockery, they bid him divine or prophesy *who it was that smote him*. Learn hence, That there is no degree of contempt, no mark of shame, no kind of suffering, which we ought to decline or stick at for Christ's sake, who hid not his face from shame and spitting upon our account. O monstrous impiety! how do they spit on that awful lovely face! How do they revile and blaspheme his noble office

of a Prophet of the most high God! *Prophecy*, say they, in a mocking derision, *who was it that smote thee?* To such acts of inhumanity did the barbarous rage of the bloody Jews carry them.

69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. 70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. 71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. 72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. 73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. 74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. 75 And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

This last paragraph of the chapter gives us an account of the fall and rising of Peter, of his sin in denying Christ, and of his recovery by a speedy and severe repentance. Both must be considered distinctly. First, As touching his sin and fall, there are four particulars observable, namely, the sin itself, the occasion of that sin, the reiteration and repetition of it, and the aggravating circumstances attending it. Observe, 1. The sin itself, the denial of Christ, *I know not the man*; a manifest untruth: next he adds an oath to confirm that untruth; *he swore that he knew not the man*. And, last of all, he wished an horrid curse and imprecation upon himself, that is, he wished himself excommunicated and cast out of the church, say some: he wished himself eternally separated from the presence of God, say others: he wished in effect that the devil might take him, if he were acquainted with Jesus. The inordinate love of life, and slavish fear of sufferings and death, may draw the best of men to commit the worst of sins. Observe, 2. The occasions of this sin, and they were



three: his following Christ afar off; his being in bad company, amongst Christ's enemies; and his presumptuous confidence of his own strength and standing. 1. His following of Christ afar off. To follow Christ is the work of faith, and fruit of love; but to follow him afar off, was the effect of fear and frailty. Woe unto us, when a temptation comes, if we be far off from Christ's presence and assistance. 2. His being in wicked company among Christ's enemies. O Peter, thou hadst better have been a-cold by thyself alone, than sitting by a fire encompassed with the blasphemies of the wicked: where thy conscience, though not scared, was yet made hard. The way to escape prevailing temptations to sin, is to shun such places, and to avoid such companions, as in all probability will invite and draw us into sin. 3. Confidence of his own strength and standing was another occasion of Peter's falling. Pride and presumptuous confidence have been ever the forerunners and occasions of a fall. O Lord! to presume upon ourselves is the ready way to provoke thee to leave us to ourselves: if ever we stand in the day of trial, it is the fear of falling must enable us to stand. Not only they who go forth in the strength of nature, but also they who go forth in the strength of inherent grace, may quickly fall from their own steadfastness. Observe, 3. The reiteration and repetition of his sin. He denies him a first, a second, and a third time. He denies him first with a lie, then with an oath, and after all with an anathema and a curse. O how dangerous is it not to resist the first beginnings of sin! If we yield to one temptation, Satan will assault us with more and stronger. Peter proceeded from a bare denial, first to perjury, then to cursing and imprecation. Observe, 4. The aggravating circumstances attending this sin of Peter, and they are these: 1. The character of the person thus falling: a disciple, an apostle, a chief apostle, a special favourite; who, with James and John, had the special honour to be with Christ upon mount Tabor; Peter, who had preached and prophesied in Christ's name, cast out devils, and wrought miracles by Christ's power, yet he denies him. 2. Consider the person whom he denies: his Master, his Saviour, and Redeemer; he that had washed Peter's feet but a little before; that eat the passover with Peter, and gave the sacrament to Peter; yet this kind and condescending Saviour was denied by

Peter. 3. Consider before whom he denies him: in the company and presence of the chief priests, scribes, and elders, and their servants, who rejoiced at it, and were hardened by it; that one disciple should sell him for money, and another disciple deny him through fear. 4. Consider the time when he denied him; verily it was but a few hours after he had received the sacrament of the Lord's supper from Christ's own hand. How unreasonable then is their objection against coming to the Lord's table, because some that go to it dishonour Christ as soon as they come from it! Such examples must not discourage us from coming to the ordinance, but excite and increase our watchfulness after we have been there, to take heed that the future conduct of our lives be suited to the solemnity of a sacramental table. 5. Consider the smallness of his temptation to deny Christ; a damsel only put the question to him, *Art thou not one of his disciples?* If a band of armed soldiers had appeared to him, and affrighted him, had he been terrified by the high priest's threatenings, bound and led away to judgment, sentenced to an ignominious, painful death, some excuse might have been made for him: but to disown his relation to Christ at the question of a maid-servant that kept the door only, the smallness of the temptation was an aggravation of the crime! "Ah, Peter, how unlike thyself art thou at this time? Not a rock, but a reed; a pillar blown down by a woman's breath! O frail humanity, whose strength is weakness and infirmity!" Observe here, That in most of the saints' falls recorded in scripture, either the first enticers, or the accidental occasions, were women. Thus in Adam's, Lot's, Samson's, David's, Solomon's, and Peter's. A weak creature may be a strong tempter; nothing is too impotent or useless for the devil's service. It was a great aggravation of Peter's sin, that the voice of a maid, a door-keeper only, should be stronger to overcome him than his faith in Jesus to sustain him. But what shall we say? Small things are sufficient to cast us down, if God doth not hold us up: we sink under any burden, if he sustain us not, and yield to every temptation, if he leave us to ourselves. A damsel shall then make a disciple shrink, and a door-keeper is enough to drive an apostle before her. *And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.*

*And he went out and wept bitterly.* Here we have an account of St. Peter's rising and recovery after his shameful fall, by a renewed act and exercise of repentance. Where observe, The suddenness of his repentance, the means of his repentance, and the manner of it. Observe, 1. The suddenness of his repentance: although his sin was great, yet his repentance was speedy and without delay. From whence note, That sins committed by the surprisal of a sudden temptation, are much sooner repented of, than where the sin is presumptuous and deliberate. David's sin of murder and adultery were presumptuous and deliberate sins; he continued a long time in them, and lived almost a twelvemonth without any solemn repentance of them. St. Peter's sin was hasty and sudden, under a violent passion of fear, contrary to his settled purpose and resolution of constancy; and he takes the warning of the second crowing of the cock, and goes forth to express his repentance. Observe, 2. The means of his repentance, which was twofold. Less principal, the crowing of the cock; more principal, Christ's looking upon Peter, and Peter's remembering the words of Christ. 1. The less principal means of St. Peter's repentance, was the crowing of the cock: as the voice of the maid occasioned him to sin, so the voice of the cock occasioned him to repent.\* That God who can work without means, doth sometimes work by weak and contemptible means, and when he pleases can open the mouth of a bird or beast for the conversion of a man. But why should our Saviour choose the crowing of a cock as a mean to bring St. Peter to repentance? There is ever some mystery in Christ's instruments; the cock was a preacher to call Peter to repentance, there being something of emblem between the cock and a preacher. A true minister must have the wings of a cock to rouse up himself from security, and to awaken others to a sense of their duty. He must have the watchfulness of a cock, to be ever ready to discover and forewarn danger. He must have the voice of a cock, to cry aloud and tell Israel of their sin, and terrify the roaring lion, and make him tremble. In a word, he must observe the hours of the night, to preach in season and out of season the glad tidings of salvation. But, 2. The more principal means of St. Peter's recovery, was, 1. Christ's looking upon

Peter. Christ first looks upon Peter with an eye of mercy, grace, and pity, before Peter looks upon his sin in order to repentance. Here take notice of the greatness of Christ's grace, of his wonderful love and mercy to his poor disciple. When our Saviour was upon his trial for his life, a time when our thoughts are wholly taken up about ourselves: even then did Christ find leisure to think upon Peter, remember to turn about, and give him a pitiful but piercing look; a look that melted his heart, and dissolved it into tears. We never begin to lament for sin, till we are first lamented by our Saviour. Jesus looked upon Peter. That is the first more principal means of Peter's repentance. The second is, Peter's remembering the words of Christ, *Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice.* This remembrance of Christ's words was an applicative and feeling remembrance of them. He remembered the prediction of Christ, and applies it sensibly to himself. Teaching us, That the efficacy of Christ's word, in order to the bringing of a soul unto repentance, depends not upon the historical remembrance of it, but upon the close application of it to every man's conscience. A sanctified remembrance of Christ's words, and our own sins, is an excellent preparative to repentance. Observe lastly, The manner of Peter's repentance: it was secret, *he went out*; it was sincere, *he wept bitterly*; it was lasting and abiding all the days of his life, and attended with an extraordinary zeal and forwardness for the service of Christ to the end of his life. 1. It was secret, *he went out*; *Vere dolet, qui sine teste dolet.* He sought a place of retirement where he might mourn in secret; he cannot well be thought to dissemble his grief, who chooses no other witness but the omnipresent God. Solitariness is most agreeable to an afflicted spirit; and as St. Peter's sorrow caused him to go forth, so might also his shame, Christ looked upon Peter, but how ashamed must Peter be to look upon Christ, considering that he so lately denied to have ever seen him! 2. His repentance was sincere, *he wept bitterly*; his grief was extraordinary, and his tears abundant. There is ever a weeping that follows sin; sin must cost the soul sorrow, either here or in hell; we must mourn awhile, or lament for ever. Doubtless with Peter's tears there was joined hearty confession of sin to God, and smart reflections upon himself after this manner: "Lord, what

\* Rp. Reynolds on St. Peter's Fall.

have I done? I that did once acknowledge my Master to be *Christ the Son of the living God*, have since denied him with oaths, curses, and imprecations. I that promised to lay down my life for his sake, have yet disowned and denied him at the voice of a damsel. O what unfaithfulness, what weakness, what wretchedness! O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep all my days for the fault of this one night!" Blessed indeed are the tears of a converted revolter, and happy is the very misery of a mournful offender. 3. This holy man's repentance was lasting and abiding; he had a lively sense and remembrance of this sin upon his soul all his life. Ecclesiastical history reports, that ever after, when St. Peter heard the crowing of a cock, he fell upon his knees and mourned; others say, that he was wont to rise at midnight, and spend the time in penitent devotion between cock-crowing and day-light. And the Papists, who love to turn every thing into superstition, began that practice of setting a cock upon the top of towers, and steeples, and chimneys, to put the people in mind of this sin of Peter, and his repentance, by that signal. Lastly, St. Peter's repentance was attended with an extraordinary zeal and forwardness for the service of Christ to the end of his life. He had an earnest love towards Christ, *Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee*: and as an evidence of it, he fed Christ's sheep; for in the Acts of the Apostles, we read of his extraordinary diligence to spread the gospel, and his travels in order thereunto are computed to be nine hundred and fifty miles: and the wisdom of God thought fit that this apostle should preach the gospel to the Jews, as St. Paul did to the Gentiles; that as he had joined with the Jews in denying and disowning Christ, so he should endeavour to persuade them to join with him in repentance, as he had joined with them in their sin. His sin was in some respect like theirs, therefore he is sent to preach the gospel to them, and his diligence therein is an undoubted proof and evidence of his repentance. Have any of us fallen with Peter, though not with a formal abjuring, yet by a practical denying, of him, let us go forth and weep with him; let us be more vigilant and watchful over ourselves for the time to come; let us express more extraordinary love unto and zeal for Christ, more

diligence in his service, and more concernedness for his honour and glory. This would be an happy improvement of this example. The Lord grant it may have that blessed effect. Amen.

#### CHAP. XXVII.

**W**HEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. 2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

The foregoing chapter gives us an account of Judas his treason, in delivering our Saviour into the hands of the chief priests. In this chapter we find our holy Lord brought by the chief priests unto Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, in order to his arraignment and condemnation. Whence observe, That it has been the old policy of corrupt church-governors to abuse the power of the civil magistrate, in executing their cruel and unjust censures upon holy and innocent persons. The chief priests and elders do not kill our Saviour themselves, but they deliver him over to the secular power, and desire Pilate, the civil magistrate, to sentence and condemn him; which soon after we shall find he did. *They bound him, and led him away*: but what need was there of binding him, that never made any resistance? And O, what ingratitude was it to bind him with cords, who came to unloose those bands of sin wherewith we were bound.

3. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. 4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Here we have a sad relation of Judas's desperate death, after an hypocritical life, as also of the horror of his mind and con-

science before his death. Observe here, 1. The time when Judas repented; after it was too late. *When he saw that he was condemned, he repented.* Learn thence, That they that will not see their sins timely to their conversion, shall see them sooner or later to their confusion. Observe, 2. The repentance itself, in the several parts and branches of it: he was sorrowful for the fact, he made confession of his sin, and made restitution for the wrong done. *He repented, saying, I have sinned; and cast down the thirty pieces of silver.* Learn thence, That a wicked man, when conscience is thoroughly awakened, may make confession of his sin, express some sorrow for it, and endeavour also the making of some satisfaction and restitution for the wrong and injury done by it. They that mourn for sin as sin; they that mourn more for the intrinsic evil that is in sin, than for the penal and consequential evils that follow sin; they that confess sin voluntarily and freely, particularly, penitently, believingly, with an eye of sorrow upon their sin, and an eye of faith fixed upon their Saviour; they that make restitution as an act of obedience to the command of God, and as an act of justice and righteousness to their neighbour; such persons' repentance shall find acceptance with God. Observe, 3. The answer and reply which the wicked high priests and elders make to despairing Judas. 1. They excuse themselves, *What is that to us?* It is natural to all sinners to shift sin from themselves, and to lay it at any door rather than their own. Those that have had a share in the pleasure and profit of sin, are yet very desirous to throw the odium and guilt of it upon others. *What is that to us?* say these monsters in sin. O wonderful stupidity! could they think it nothing to them to hire a man to betray innocent blood? Was not the money given the price of blood, and the field they bought called the field of blood? yet do they impudently say, *What is that to us?* 2. As they excuse and acquit themselves, so they load and burden him: *Look thou to that.* Lord! what miserable comforters are companions in sin to one another, when distress and sorrow comes upon them! When sin comes to be questioned in order to its being punished, every sinner is for shifting for himself, and leaves his fellow in the lurch. Let us then remember the words of the Holy Ghost, *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools*

*shall be destroyed.* How jolly soever sinners are together, when in the height of their lusts; they are but miserable comforters to one another upon a sick bed, or under the lashes of an awakened conscience. But though they may avoid each other now, there is a time coming when it will be impossible; at the great day the sinner shall see both his companions in sin, and his sins themselves, to be what he would never believe them here, the vilest of monsters. Observe, 4. The sad and fatal end of Judas; *he went forth and hanged himself.* Horror and despair took hold upon him, and seized his conscience; which was so intolerable, that he ran to the halter for a remedy. Learn hence, 1. That conscience is a powerful though invisible executioner; the wrath of man may be endured, but the wrath of God is insupportable, and the eruptions of conscience are irresistible. O how intolerable are those scourges that lash us in this tender and vital part! Judas awakened with the horror of his fact, conscience begins to rouse, and the man is unable to bear up under the furious revenge of his own mind. There is an active principle in men's breasts and bosoms, which seldom suffers daring sinners to pass in quiet to their graves. Guilt is naturally troublesome and uneasy; it disturbs the peace and serenity of the mind, and fills the soul with storms and thunder, both in life and death. How vainly did Judas hope to take sanctuary in a grave, and to meet with that ease in another world which he could not find in this! Thus ended this miserable man, Judas. Behold! ye professors of religion, the terrible example of God's justice on a deceitful hypocrite. Behold! a disciple, an apostle, first a traitor, and then a self-murderer. Behold! all ye covetous worldlings, to what the love of that accursed idol has brought this wretched apostle. Behold! Judas, once shining in the robes of a glorious profession, now shining in the flames of God's eternal wrath and vengeance. Lord! how earnest ought we to be for thy preserving grace, when neither the presence, the miracles, the sermons, the sacraments of Christ, could preserve and secure a professor, a disciple, and apostle, from the fatal mischief of a ruinous apostasy! *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.*

6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the

treasury, because it is the price of blood. 7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. 9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; 10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

Observe here, 1. The niceness and scrupulosity of these hypocrites: they made no scruple to give money to shed blood, but they scruple the putting that money into the treasury which was the price of blood. They are afraid to defile their treasury, but are not afraid to pollute their souls. Thus hypocrites *strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*; scruple a ceremony, but make no conscience of murder and perjury. Observe, 2. The use which they put this money to, which Judas brought them: they bought with it a field to bury strangers in. Thus Christ, who was himself a Stranger in a borrowed grave, by the price of his blood (being thirty pieces of silver) conferred graves on many strangers. Observe lastly, How the wisdom of God ordered it, that hereby a scripture-prophecy might be fulfilled, Zech. xi. 13. *They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver, and I took and cast them unto the potter.* Whence learn, That all the indignities and abasing sufferings which the Lord Jesus underwent, were not only fore-ordained by God, but also foretold by the holy prophets; his being scourged, buffeted, spit upon, and here his being sold for thirty pieces of silver.

11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. 12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. 13 Then saith Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? 14 And he answered him to never a word; inso-

much that the governor marvelled greatly.

Observe here, 1. That our Saviour readily answers Pilate, but refuses to answer the chief priests before Pilate. Pilate asks him, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* Jesus readily answers, *Thou sayest*: or, It is as thou sayest. But to all the accusations of the chief priests, and to all that they laid to his charge before Pilate, our Saviour answers never a word: probably for these reasons; because his innocence was such as needed no apology; because their calumnies and accusations were so notoriously false, that they needed no confutation; to show his contempt of death, and to teach us by his own example patience and silence, when for his sake we are slandered and traduced. Learn thence, That although we are not obliged to answer every captious and ensnaring question, nor to refute every slander and false accusation, yet we are bound faithfully to own and confess the truth, when we are solemnly called thereunto. Our Saviour, as a deaf man, hears not, answers not, the calumnies of the chief priests; but when Pilate asks him, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* or, as St. Mark has it, *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* Jesus said, *I am*; though he knew that answer would cost him his life. Hence the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 13. says, *That Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.* Teaching us, sometimes to hold our peace when our reputation is concerned; but never to be silent when the honour of God, the glory of his truth, the edification and confirmation of others, may effectually be promoted by our open confession: then must we with Christ give a direct, plain, and sincere answer. For whoever *denies him*, or any truth of his, knowingly and wilfully, *him will Christ deny in the presence of his Father, and before all his holy angels.*

15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. 16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. 17 Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? 18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

Now at the feast, that is, at the feast of the passover, which by way of eminence is called *the feast*, the governor used to release a prisoner; (possibly by way of memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt); accordingly Pilate makes a motion to them, that Christ may be the prisoner set at liberty in honour at their feast; for he was sensible that what they did was out of envy and malice. As covetousness sold Christ, so envy delivered him. Envy is a killing and murderous passion: *Envy slayeth the silly one*, Job v. 2. That is, it slays the silly person who harbours this pestilent lust in his bosom, and is like a fire in his bones continually preying upon him, causing him to pine away, and die miserably, because another lives happily. To envy another man's prosperity, is an argument of the worst simplicity; yea, farther, as envy slayeth the silly one, so it prompts and provokes the sinner to seek the slaying of simple and innocent ones. Envy wishes the envied person out of the way, yea, out of the world; and, if need be, will not only wish it, but lend a lift towards it too; witness the chief priests here, whose envy was so conspicuous, that Pilate himself takes notice of it, and says, *He knew that for envy they had delivered him*.

19 When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

There are several sorts or kinds of dreams, natural, moral, diabolical, and divine. The question is what kind of dream was this? Not natural, all agree; some think it was diabolical, and that Satan hoped thereby to prevent the work of man's redemption by the death of Christ. But if so, why had not Pilate the dream rather than his wife? Probably this was from God, for even our very dreams are ordered by God; our sleeping as well as our waking times are in God's hand. Learn hence, How wonderfully the wisdom and power of God is seen in this woman's testimony, which she gave to the innocence of our Saviour. When all his disciples were fled from him, when none of his friends durst speak a word for him, God raises up a woman, a stranger, a pagan, to give evidence of his innocence. And it

is observable, that at our Saviour's trial not one mouth was opened to plead or speak a word for him, in defence of innocence itself, but only Pilate's and his wife's; they both pronounced him righteous, though they were Gentiles and pagans, whilst his own kindred and countrymen, the Jews, thirst after his righteous and innocent blood.

20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. 21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. 22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. 23 And the governor said, Why? what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

Observe here, 1. How exceedingly unwilling and averse Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death; one while he bids the Jews take him themselves, and judge him according to their law; another while he offers to save Christ in honour of their feast, when by custom he was to release a prisoner, and this prisoner he desired might be Jesus. When this would not satisfy, he expostulates with them about our Saviour's innocence, *What evil has he done?* Nay, St Luke says, chap. xxiii. *That Pilate came forth three times, and professed that he found no fault in him*. Yet though Pilate was satisfied, the Jews would not be denied. Thence learn, That wicked men and hypocrites, within the visible church, may be guilty of such tremendous acts of wickedness, as the conscience of infidels and pagans without the church may boggle at, and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, whilst hypocritical Jews, which had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles, condemn him. But observe, 2. Who influenced the main body of the Jews to desire Barabbas, and to destroy Jesus. It was the *chief priests and elders*, they persuaded the multitude. Woe to the people when their guides and leaders are corrupt; for then they shall be tempted by wicked counsel; and woe unto them, much more, if they follow their wicked

and pernicious counsels. Thus did the Jews follow their guides the chief priests, till they had preserved Barabbas and destroyed Jesus.

24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see *ye to it*.

Two things are here observable in Pilate's washing of his hands. 1. By this action he pronounces our Saviour's innocency, and was willing thereby to testify his own, that he did not consent to our Saviour's death ; washing the hands being a usual ceremony in protestation of a person's innocency. But, 2. It was great folly and madness in Pilate, to think that washing of his hands did or could free him from the guilt of innocent blood. " O Pilate ! thou hadst need rub hard if thou meanest to scour from thy soul the guilt of that crimson sin which thou hast committed ; thy guilt cleaves so close unto thee, that nothing can expiate it but the blood which thou hast spilt." Neither was it any excuse of Pilate's sin, that what he did was to please the people, and to gratify their importunity. It is a fond apology for sins, when persons pretend they were not committed with their own consent, but at others' instigation and importunity.

25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.

That is, " Let the guilt and punishment of his blood rest upon us and our posterity." A most horrid and impious imprecation ! The dreadful effects of it began to come upon them forty years after in the destruction of Jerusalem, and has rested and remained upon their posterity to this day, near seventeen hundred years ; the Jews being vagabonds over the earth, abhorred by all nations wheresoever they come. The just God has heard their wicked wish, and caused that blood to fall upon them in so severe, though righteous, a manner, as must pierce the heart of those that read and observe it. God has given them blood to drink, as indeed they were worthy. This ought to be a terror and a warning to all persons, that they avoid all cursed imprecations, and wicked wishes, upon them-

selves or others. Woe to such as wish damnation to themselves, pox and plague upon others. How if God say Amen, and ratifies in heaven thy cursed imprecations made on earth, as he did this of the wicked Jews ; *His blood be on us and on our children !* Yet what they with a wicked mind put up as a direful imprecation, we may with a pious mind offer up to God as an humble petition ; Lord, let thy Son's blood, not in the guilt and punishment, but in the efficacy and merit of it, be upon us, and upon our posterity after us, for evermore.

26 Then released he Barabbas unto them : and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified.

As the death of the cross was a Roman punishment, so it was the manner of the Romans first to scourge and whip their malefactors, and then deliver them to be crucified. Now the manner of the Romans' scourging is said to be thus : they stripped the condemned person, and bound him to a post ; two strong men first scourged him with rods of thorns ; then two others scourged him with whips of cords full of knots : and, lastly, two more with whips of wire, and therewith tore off the very flesh and skin from the person's back and sides. That our Saviour was thus cruelly scourged, seems to some not improbable from that of the psalmist, Psal. cxxix. 3. *The ploughers ploughed upon my back, and made long furrows.* Which, if spoken prophetically of Christ, was literally fulfilled in the day of his scourging. But why was the precious body of our precious Lord thus galled and torn with scourgings ? Doubtless to fulfil that prophecy ; *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.—That by his stripes we might be healed.* And to learn us patience from his example ; Why should we think it strange to be scourged either with the tongue or the hand, or with both, when we see our dear Redeemer bleeding by stripes and scourges before our eyes ?

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. 28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they

put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand : and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! 30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. 31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

The next part of our Lord's sufferings consisted of cruel mockings. Our blessed Saviour had said that he was the King of the Jews ; not a temporal king to reign over them with pomp and power, but a spiritual King, to rule in the hearts of his people : but the Jews, missing of their expectation of a temporal king in Christ, look upon him as an impostor ; and accordingly they treat him as a mock king, putting a crown upon his head, but a very ignominious and painful one, *a crown of thorns* ; a sceptre in his hand, but it was of a reed, and a robe of purple or scarlet, both which were used by princes, and bowed the knee before him, as they were wont to do to princes. Thus all the marks of scorn imaginable are put upon our blessed Redeemer : yet that which they did in jest God did in earnest ; for all these things were ensigns and marks of sovereignty ; and Almighty God caused the regal dignity of his Son to appear and shine forth, even in the midst of his greatest abasement. Whence was all this jeering and sport, but to flout majesty ? And why did Christ undergo all this ignominy, disgrace, and shame, but to show us what was due unto us for our sins, and to give us an example to bear all the scorn, reproach, and shame imaginable, for his sake : *Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.*

32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name : him they compelled to bear his cross. 33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, A place of a scull, 34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall : and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. 35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting

lots ; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. 36 And sitting down, they watched him there ;

The sentence of death being passed by Pilate, who can with dry eyes behold the sad pomp of our Saviour's bloody execution ? Forth comes the blessed Jesus out of Pilate's gates bearing that cross which was soon after to bear him. With his cross on his shoulder he marches towards Golgotha : and when they see he can go no faster, they force Simon the Cyrenæan, not out of compassion, but from indignation, to be the porter of his cross. This Cyrenæan being a Gentile, not a Jew ; who bare our Saviour's cross, might signify and show, that the Gentiles should have a part in Christ, and be sharers with the Jews in the benefits of his cross. At length Christ comes to the place of execution, Golgotha, or mount Calvary. Here in a public place, with infamous company, betwixt two thieves, he is crucified ; that is, fastened to a great cross of wood, his hands stretched forth abroad, and his feet close together, and both hands and feet fastened with nails ; his naked body was lifted up in the open air, hanging betwixt heaven and earth ; thereby intimating, that the crucified person was unfit to live in either. This shameful, painful, and accursed death, did the holy and innocent Jesus undergo for sinners. Some observe all the dimensions of length, breadth, depth, and height, in our Saviour's sufferings : for length, his passion was several hours long, from twelve to three, exposed all that time both to hunger and cold ; the thieves crucified with him were not dead so soon ; they endured but personal pain, he undergoing the miseries of all mankind. But what his passion wanted in length, it had it in breadth, extending over all the parts and powers of his soul and body, no part free but his tongue, which was at liberty to pray for his enemies. His sight was tormented with the scornful gestures of such as passed by, *wagging their heads* ; his hearing grieved with the taunts and jeers of the priests and people ; his smelling offended with the noisome savours in the Place of Skulls ; his taste, with the gall and vinegar given him to drink. His feeling was wonderfully affected by the nails which pierced his hands and feet,



and the crown of thorns which pierced his tender temples with a multiplicity of wounds. And for the depth of his passion, it was as deep as hell itself; enduring tortures in his soul, as well as torments in his body; groaning under the burden of desertion, and crying out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Lastly, for the height of his sufferings, they were as high as heaven; his person being innocent and infinite, no less than the Son of God, which adds an infinite worth and value to his sufferings. *Lord, let us be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, depth and height, and let us know the love of Christ, which in suffering for us passeth knowledge.* So infinite every way were the dimensions of it.

**37** And set up over his head his accusation written, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

It was the manner of the Romans, when they crucified any man, to publish the cause of his death in capital letters placed over the head of the person. Now see how the wisdom and providence of God powerfully overruled the heart and pen of Pilate to draw this title, which was truly honourable, and fix it to his cross: Pilate is Christ's herald, and proclaims him, *King of the Jews.* Learn hence, That the regal dignity of Christ was proclaimed by an enemy, and that in a time of his greatest sufferings and reproaches. Pilate did Christ a special honour, and an eminent piece of service. He did that for Christ which none of his own disciples durst do: but he did it not designedly for his glory, but from the special overruling power of Divine Providence: but the highest services performed to Christ undesignedly, shall never be accepted nor rewarded by God.

**38** Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left. **39** And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, **40** And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. **41** Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, **42** He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King

of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. **43** He trusted in God: let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. **44** The thieves also which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Here we have several aggravations of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross. 1. From the company he suffered with, *two thieves.* It had been disparagement enough to our blessed Saviour to have been sorted with the best of men; but to be numbered with the scum of mankind, is such an indignity as confounds our thoughts. This was intended by the Jews to dishonour him the more, and to persuade the world that he was the greatest of offenders; but God overruled this that the scripture might be fulfilled, *He was numbered with the transgressors.* 2. Another aggravation of our Lord's sufferings on the cross, was, the scorn and mocking derision which he met with in his dying moments from the common people, from the chief priests, and from the thieves that suffered with him. The common people both in words and actions expressed scorn and detestation against him. *They reviled him, wagging their heads.* The chief priests, though men of age and gravity, not only barbarously mock him in his extremest misery, whom humanity obliged them to pity; but they scoff atheistically and profanely, jeering at his faith and affiance in God, tauntingly saying, *He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him now, if he will have him.* Where observe, That persecutors are generally atheists, though they make a profession of religion. The chief priests and elders here, though learned and knowing men, yet they blaspheme God, mock at his power, and deride his providence, which was as bad as to deny his being. Hence we may gather, That those who administer to God in holy things by way of office, if they be not the best, they are the worst of men. No such bitter enemies to the power of godliness, as the ministers of religion who were never acquainted with the efficacy and power of it in their own hearts and lives. Nothing on this side hell is worse than a wicked priest, a minister of God devoted to the service of the devil. A third aggravation of our Lord's

sufferings on the cross, was, that the thieves that suffered with him reviled him with the rest; that is, one of them as St. Luke has it, or perhaps both of them, might do it at first. Which if so, increases the wonder of the penitent thief's conversion. From the thief's impenitency we learn, That neither shame nor pain will change the mind of a resolute sinner, but even then when he is in the very suburbs of hell, will he blaspheme.

45 Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This man calleth for Elias. 48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. 49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. 50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Observe here, 1. How the rays of Christ's divinity, and the glory of his Godhead, break out and shine forth in the midst of that infirmity which his human nature laboured under. He shows himself to be the God of nature, by altering the course of nature. The sun is eclipsed, and darkness overspreads the earth for *three hours*; namely, from twelve o'clock to three. Thus the sun in the firmament becomes close mourner at our Lord's death, and the whole frame of nature puts itself into a funeral habit. Observe, 2. That the chief of Christ's sufferings consisted in the sufferings of his soul; the distress of his spirit was more intolerable than the torments of his body, as appears by his mournful complaint, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* being the first words of the 22d Psalm; and some conceive that he repeated that whole psalm, it being an admirable narrative of the dolours of his passion. Learn thence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, when suffering for our sins, was really deserted for a time, and left destitute of all sensible consolation. *Why hast thou forsaken me?* Learn farther, that under this desertion Christ despaired

not, but still retained a firm persuasion of God's love unto him, and experienced necessary supports from him. *My God, my God*; these are words of faith and affiance, striving under temptation. Christ was thus forsaken for us, that we might never be forsaken of God; yet by God's forsaking of Christ, is not to be understood any abatement of divine love, but only a withdrawing from the human nature the sense of his love, and a letting out upon his soul a deep afflicting sense of his displeasure against sin. There is a total and eternal desertion, by which God utterly forsakes a man, both of his grace and glory, being wholly cast out of God's presence, and adjudged to eternal torments; this was not compatible to Christ, nor agreeable to the dignity of his person. But there is a partial and temporary desertion, when God for a little moment hides his face from his children: now this was both agreeable to the dignity of Christ's nature, and also suitable to his office, who was to satisfy the justice of God for our forsaking of him, and to bring us near to him, that we might be received for ever. Observe lastly, What a miraculous evidence Christ gave of his divinity instantly before he gave up the ghost. *He cried with a loud voice.* This showed that he did not die according to the ordinary course of nature, gradually departing and drawing on, as we express it. No, his life was whole in him, and nature as strong at last as at first. Other men die gradually, and towards their end their sense of pain is much blunted; they fault, fumble, and die by degrees; but Christ stood under the pains of death in his full strength; his life was whole in him. This was evident by the mighty outcry he made when he gave up the ghost, contrary to the sense and experience of all other persons; this argued him to be full of strength. And he that could cry with such a loud voice (*in articulo mortis*) as he did, could have kept himself from dying if he would. Hence we learn, That when Christ died, he rather conquered death, than was conquered by death. He must voluntarily and freely lay down his life, before death could come at him. *He yielded up the ghost.* O wonderful sight! the Lord of life hangs dead, dead on the accursed tree. O severe and inexorable justice in God! O amazing and astonishing love in Christ! love beyond expression, beyond conception, beyond all comprehension; with what comparison shall we compare it! Verily with nothing but itself; never was love like thine.

51 And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. 54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. 55 And many women were there, beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him; 56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

Here we have an account of several extraordinary and wonderful things which occurred and fell out about the time that our Saviour died. 1. *The vail of the temple rent asunder.* That is, the hanging which parted the holy from the most holy place, to hide the mysteries therein, namely, the ark of the covenant and mercy-seat, from the view of the ordinary priests. This vail was now rent from the top to the bottom, and the rending of it did import these great mysteries: 1. That now our great High-Priest was entering into the most holy place with his own blood, having made the atonement for us: Heb. ix. 12. *By his own blood he entered once into the most holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* 2. That the means whereby he entered into the most holy place, was by the rending of his humanity, his soul from his body, typified by rending of this vail; accordingly his body is called a vail, Heb. x. 20. *Consecrated through the vail of his flesh.* 3. That now by the death of Christ all those dark mysteries veiled up formerly in the most holy place, as the ark of the covenant and mercy-seat, are now unfolded and laid open, and the use of the whole ceremonial law at an end, and the Jewish temple-service ceased. 4. That now the kingdom of heaven, the most holy place, is open to all believers. Christ, our great High Priest, is entered in with his own blood,

and hath not closed the vail after him, but rent it asunder, and made and left a passage for all believers to follow him, first in their prayers, and next in their persons. See Heb. x. 19, 20. *Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; let us draw near with a true heart, &c.* Observe, 2. The earth quaked. As there was an universal eclipse, so likewise an universal earthquake, at our Lord's crucifixion, which did awaken many of the saints (that died before our Saviour's incarnation) out of their dead sleep. These arose both as witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and also as sharers in it. But none of them arose till Christ was risen, *he being the First-fruits of them that slept.* And those holy persons that arose with him, possibly attended him to heaven at his ascension. From hence we learn, That Christ was the Saviour of those who believed in him before his incarnation, as well as of those that believed in him since his incarnation; and that the former are partakers of the fruit and benefit of his death and resurrection, no less than the latter. Others conjecture, that those who rose out of their graves, were such as believed in Christ, and died before him, as old Simeon, &c. Accordingly they understand St. John v. 25. *The hour is coming, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man,* of this resurrection here mentioned. And whereas it is said they *went into the holy city, and appeared to many*; it is probable they were known to them unto whom they did appear; and if so, they must have lived in the time of their knowledge. Observe next, What influence and effect the sight of those prodigious things had upon the centurion and the soldiers; it convinced them, that *verily this was the Son of God.* Here, we see the heathen soldiers are sooner convinced of the divinity of Christ, than the unbelieving Jewish doctors. Obstinacy and unbelief filled their minds with an invincible prejudice against Christ; so that neither the miracles done by him in his life, nor wrought at his death, could convince the high priests, that Christ was any other than an impostor and deceiver. Observe lastly, Who of Christ's friends were witnesses of his death: *They are women, who followed him from Galilee, and ministered unto him*; not one of his dear disciples, except St. John, who stood by the cross with the Virgin Mary. What a

shame was this for the apostles to be absent from a spectacle upon which the salvation of the whole world did depend; and what an honour was this to the female sex in general, and to these women in particular, that they had the courage to follow Christ to the cross, when all the disciples forsook him and fled; God can make women glorious professors of his truth, and arm them against the fears of sufferings, contrary to the natural timorousness of their tempers. These women wait upon Christ's cross, when apostles fly, and durst not come near it.

57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: 58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. 59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. 61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

Here we have an account given of our Lord's funeral and interment in the grave: such a funeral as never was since graves were first digged. Concerning which we have these particulars observable: Observe, 1. The preparatives that were made for our Lord's funeral; namely, the begging and perfuming of his dead body; his body could not be buried, till by begging it was obtained of Pilate; the dead bodies of malefactors being in the power and disposal of the judge. Pilate grants it, and to manifest their dear affection to their dead Lord, they wrapt the body in fine linen with spices to perfume it. But what need of odours for that body which could not see corruption? Though his holy body did not want them, yet the affections of his friends could not withhold them. Observe, 2. The bearers that carried his body to the grave, or the persons concerned in solemnizing his funeral: Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, two rich men, and two secret disciples. (1) They were rich men, senators, honourable counsellors; and so that prophecy was fulfilled, Isa. liii. 9. *He made his grave*

*with the wicked, and with the rich, in his death.* (2.) They were good men, as well as rich men; disciples, though secretly, for fear of the Jews. Grace doth not always make a public and open show where it is. As there is much secret riches in the bowels of the earth which no eye ever saw, so there may be grace in the heart of a christian, which the world takes no notice of. We never heard any news of Joseph of Arimathea till now; yet was he eminently rich, wise, and good: a worthy, though a close disciple. Much grace may be where little is seen. Some gracious persons cannot put forward and discover themselves like others, and yet such weak christians perhaps, when a trial comes, shall stand their ground, when stronger run away.—We read of none of the apostles at Christ's funeral; fear had chased them away, though they professed a readiness to die with Christ: but Joseph and Nicodemus appear boldly for him. Let it be a caution to strong christians, neither to glory in themselves, nor to glory over the weak. If God desert the strong, and assist the weak, *the feeble shall be as David and the strong as tow.* Observe, 3. The mourners that followed the hearse; namely, the women that followed him out of Galilee, and particularly the two Marias: a very poor train of mourners, a few sorrowful women. Others are attended to their graves by their relations and friends; but Christ's disciples were all scattered, and afraid to own him either dying or dead. Our blessed Lord affected no pomp or gallantry in his life, and it was no way suitable either to the end or manner of his death. Humiliation was designed in his death, and his burial was the lowest degree of his humiliation. Observe, 4. The grave or sepulchre in which they buried him; *it was in a garden.* As by the sin of the first Adam we were driven out of the garden of pleasure, the earthly paradise; so by the sufferings of the second Adam, who lay buried in a garden, we may hope for an entrance into the heavenly paradise. It was in a *sepulchre hewn out of a rock*; that so his enemies might have no occasion to cavil, and say, that his disciples stole him away by secret holes, or unseen passages under ground. And it was in a new sepulchre, in which never any man was laid, lest his adversaries should say, it was some other that was risen, or that he rose from the dead by touching some other corpse.

Observe, 5. The manner of our Lord's funeral; hastily, openly, decently celebrated. It was done in haste, by reason of the straits of time, the preparation for the pass-over caused them to be very expeditious; the sabbath was approaching, and they lay all business aside to prepare for that. Learn hence, How much it is our duty to despatch our worldly business as early as we can towards the end of the week, that we may be the better prepared to sanctify the Lord's day, if we live to enjoy it. We ought to remember that day before it comes, and to sanctify it when it is come. Again, our Lord was buried openly, as well as hastily; all persons had liberty to be spectators, that none might object there was any fraud or deceit used in or about his burial. He was also interred decently, his body wrapt in fine linen, and perfumed with odours, according to the Jewish custom, which used not to unbowel, but embalm their dead. Observe, 6. The reason why our Lord was buried, seeing he was to rise again in as short a time as other men lie by the walls; and had his dead body remained a thousand years unburied, it could have seen no corruption, having never been tainted with sin. Sin is the cause of the body's corruption, it is sin that makes our bodies stink worse than carrion when they are dead. A funeral then was not necessary for Christ's body upon the same accounts that it is necessary for ours. But, 1. He was buried to declare the certainty of his death, and the reality of his resurrection; and for this reason did God's providence order it, that he should be embalmed, to cut off all pretensions. For in this kind of embalming, his mouth, his ears, and his nostrils, were all filled with spices and odours, so that there could be no latent principle of life in him; being thus buried then, declares him to be certainly dead. 2. He was buried to fulfil the types and prophecies that went before concerning him. Jonas's being three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was a type of Christ's being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth; and the prophet, Isa. liii. 9. had declared the manner of his funeral long before he was born. *He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.* Pointing by that expression at this tomb of Joseph's, who was a rich man; and the scriptures cannot be broken. 3. He was buried to complete his humiliation; *They have brought me to the dust*

*of death*, says David, a type of Christ. This was the lowest step he could possibly descend in his abased state; lower he could not be laid, and so low his blessed head must be laid, else he had not been humbled to the lowest. 4. He went into the grave that he might conquer death in its own territories and dominions. Christ's victory over the grave causes his saints to triumph, and sing, *O grave, where is thy destruction!* Our blessed Lord has perfumed the bed of the grave by his own lying in it: so that a pillow of down is not so soft to a believer's head, as a pillow of dust. Observe lastly, of what use the doctrine of our Lord's burial may be unto us. 1. For instruction; here we see the amazing depths of our Lord's humiliation. From what, to what, his love brought him; even from the bosom of his Father, to the bosom of a grave. Now the depth of his humiliation shows us the fulness and sufficiency of his satisfaction as well as the heinousness of our transgression. 2. For consolation against the fears of death and the grave. The grave received Christ, but could not retain him. Death swallowed him up, as the fish did Jonas, but quickly vomited him up again; so shall it fare with Christ mystical, as it did with Christ personal: the grave could not long keep him, it shall not for ever keep us: as his body rested in hope, so shall ours also; and though they see corruption, which he did not, yet shall they not always lie under the power of corruption. In a word, Christ's lying in the grave has changed and altered the nature of the grave; it was a prison before, a bed of rest now; a loathsome grave before, a perfumed bed now. He whose head is in heaven, need not fear to put his foot into the grave. *Awake and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust*, for the enmity of the grave is slain by Christ. 3. For imitation; let us study and endeavour to be buried with Christ, in respect of our sins: I mean, Rom. vi. 4. *buried with him into death.* Our sins should be as a dead body, in several respects. Are dead bodies removed far from the society of men? So should our sins be removed far from us. Do dead bodies in the grave spend and consume away by little and little? So should our sins daily. Will dead bodies grow every day more and more loathsome to others? So should our sins be to ourselves. Do dead bodies wax out of memory, and are quite forgotten?

So should our sins, in respect of any delight that we take in remembering of them. We should always remember our sins to our humiliation; but never think or speak of them with the least delight or satisfaction; for this, in God's account, is a new commission of them, and lays us under an additional guilt.

62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. 66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

This last paragraph of the chapter acquaints us with the endeavours that the murderers of Christ used to prevent his foretold resurrection: they ask and obtain of Pilate, that his sepulchre may be strongly guarded till the third day was past and over, when probably they intended to have exposed his dead body to the view of the people; and accordingly a three-fold guard is set about the grave; the stone, the seal, and the watch; concluding that Christ was safe enough either from rising or stealing; the stone making the grave sure, the seal making the stone sure, and the watch or band of soldiers making all sure. The stone being sealed with the public seal, no person might meddle with it upon pain of death. Where note, 1. The wonderful wisdom, the overruling power and providence, of God; by this excessive care and extraordinary diligence, the high priests hoped to prevent our Saviour's resurrection, but the truth and belief of it was hereby confirmed to all the world. How much evidence had Christ's resurrection wanted, if the high priests and elders had not been thus maliciously industrious to prevent his rising! Learn, 2. That the endeavours used to

obstruct our Lord's resurrection, have rendered it more certain and undoubted: had not all this care and caution been used by his enemies, the grounds of our faith had not been so strong, so evident, and so clear. It was very happy that the Jews were thus jealous and suspicious, thus careful and distrustful; for otherwise the world had never received so full and perfect an evidence of Christ's resurrection as now, whereon all our comfort and salvation doth depend. Verily their solicitous care to suppress our Redeemer's resurrection has rendered it more conspicuous, and freed it from all suspicion of forgery.

CHAP. XXVIII.

This last chapter of *St. Matthew* contains the history of our Saviour's resurrection, and gives us an account of what he did on earth between the time of his triumphant resurrection and his glorious ascension.

**I**N the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

The Lord of life was buried upon the Friday, in the evening of that day on which he was crucified; and his holy body rested in the silent grave the next day, and a part of the morning of the day following. Thus he arose again the third day, neither sooner nor later; not sooner, lest the truth of his death should have been questioned, that he did not die at all; and not later, lest the faith of his disciples should have failed. And accordingly, when the sabbath was past, and it dawned towards the first day of the week, in the morning very early, before day, Mary Magdalene, and other devout women, go to visit the sepulchre, intending with their spices and odours farther to embalm our Lord's body. But observe, Although the hearts of these good women did burn with an ardent love and zeal to their crucified Lord, yet the commanded duties of the sabbath are not omitted by them; they stay till the sabbath is ended, and then early in the morning they go with odours in their hands to perfume his sacred corpse; fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the presence of the watchmen; how great a tribute of respect and honour is due and payable to these women for their magnanimity and courage! They followed Christ, when his disciples left him; they accompanied him to his cross, and followed his hearse to the grave, when none of his

disciples durst appear. Learn hence, That courage is the special and peculiar gift of God; and where God gives courage, it is not in man to make afraid.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Observe here, 1. With what pomp and triumph doth our Lord arise. The earth that quaked before at his crucifixion, quakes now again at his resurrection: it quaked then at the dissolution, now at the re-union, of his human nature, to tell the world that the God of nature then suffered, and now conquered. Observe, 2. How an angel is employed in Christ's resurrection; he rolls away the stone. But could not Christ have risen then without the angel's help? Yes sure; he that raised himself, surely could have removed the stone; but God thinks fit to send an officer from heaven to open the prison door of the grave; and by setting our Surety at liberty, proclaims our debt to the divine justice fully satisfied. Besides, it was fit that the angels, who had been witnesses of our Saviour's passion, should also be witnesses of his resurrection. Observe, 3. How unable the keepers of the grave were to bear the sight and presence of the angel; *They shook for fear, and became as dead men.* Angels being pure and perfect spirits, man is not able to bear the sight of an angel, no, not in human shape, without terror and affrightment; and if the sight of an angel be so dreadful, what is the sight of God himself?

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

Observe here, 1. Our Lord's resurrection asserted and declared, *He is risen.* God

never intended that the Darling of his soul should be lost in an obscure sepulchre. *He is not here,* says the angel; that is, in the grave, where you laid him, where you left him. Death hath lost its Prey, and the grave hath lost her Guest. Observe, 2. It is not said, he is not here, for he is raised, but, *He is risen.* The word imports the active power of Christ, or the self-quickening principle by which Christ raised himself from the dead. Acts i. 3. *He showed himself alive after his passion.* Learn hence, That it was the divine nature or Godhead of Christ, which raised his human nature from death to life. Others were raised from the grave by Christ's power, he raised himself by his own power. Observe, 3. The testimony or witness given to our Lord's resurrection; that of an angel: *The angel said, He is not here, but risen.* But why is an angel the first publisher of our Lord's resurrection? Surely the dignity of our Lord's person, and the excellency of his resurrection, required that it should be first published by an angel, and accordingly it is worthy our observation, how very serviceable and officious the holy angels were in attending upon our Saviour in the days of his flesh; an angel foretells his conception to the blessed Virgin; an angel proclaims his birth to the shepherds; an angel succours him in his temptation in the wilderness; an angel comforts him in his agony in the garden; and at his resurrection an angel rolls away the stone from the sepulchre, and brings the first tidings of it to the women. In his ascension the angels bore him company to heaven: and when he comes again to judgment, *he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.* Observe, 4. The persons to whom our Lord's resurrection was first made known, to women, to the two Marias. But why to the women? God will make choice of weak means for producing great effects, knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honour of the agent. In the whole dispensation of the gospel, Almighty God intermixes divine power with human weakness. Thus the conception of Christ was by the power of the Holy Ghost; but his mother, a poor woman, a carpenter's spouse; so the crucifixion of Christ was in much meanness and outward baseness, being crucified between two thieves: but the powers of heaven and earth trembling, the rocks rending, and the graves opening, showed a mixture of divine power. God will honour

what instruments he pleases, for the accomplishment of his own purposes. But why to these two women, the two Mariæ, is the discovery of Christ's resurrection first made? Possibly it was a reward for their magnanimity and masculine courage. These women cleaved to Christ when the apostles fled from him, and forsook him; they assisted at his cross, they attended at his funeral, they watched his sepulchre. These women had more courage than the apostles, therefore God makes the women apostles to the apostles; he sends them to tell the apostles of the resurrection, and they must have the news at the second hand. O what a tacit rebuke was thereby given to the apostles! a secret check, that they should be thus outdone by poor women. These holy women went before the apostles in the last services that were done for Christ, and therefore the apostles here come after them in their rewards and comforts. Observe, 5. The evidence which the angel offers to the women, to evince and prove the verity and certainty of our Saviour's resurrection; namely, by an appeal to their senses, *Come, see the place where the Lord lay.* The senses, when rightly disposed, are the proper judges of all sensible objects; Christ himself did appeal to his disciples' senses concerning the truth of his own resurrection; *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself:* and indeed, if we must not believe our senses, we shall want the best external evidence for the proof of the truth of the christian religion; namely, the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles; for what assurance can we have of the reality of these miracles, but from our senses; therefore says our Saviour, *If ye believe not me, yet believe the works that I do;* that is, the miracles which I have wrought before your eyes. Now as my senses tell me that Christ's miracles were true, so they assure me that the doctrine of transubstantiation is false. From the whole note, That the Lord Jesus Christ, by the omnipotent power of his Godhead, revived and rose again from the dead, to the terror and consternation of his enemies, and the unspeakable joy and consolation of believers.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail.

And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. 10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Observe here, 1. What haste and speed these holy women make to carry the news of Christ's resurrection to the apostles: such as find and feel their hearts grieved for the absence and want of Christ, will be very ready to comfort such as are in the same condition. O how glad are these holy women to carry the good news of their Lord's resurrection to the heart-broken disciples. Observe, 2. How these holy women hastened, in obedience to the angel's command, to tell the disciples to meet with Christ in the way. Such as obey the directions of God's ministers, seeking Christ in his own way and means, shall find him to their comfort sooner than they expected. These holy women find Christ before they looked for him: *As they went to tell his disciples, Jesus met them.* O happy women! whilst they were weeping for a dead Christ, they find a living Jesus. Observe, 3. The affectionate and loving title which Christ puts upon his disciples: *Tell my brethren.* He might have said, "Go tell those apostate apostles, that cowardly left me in my danger, that durst not own me in the high priest's hall, that durst not come within the shadow of my cross, nor within the sight of my sepulchre." Not a word of this, by way of upbraiding them for their late shameful cowardice; but all words of kindness: *Go tell my brethren.* Where note, That Christ calls his disciples *brethren* after his resurrection and exaltation, as he had done before in his state of humiliation, to show the continuance of his former affection to them, and that the change of his condition had wrought no change in his affection towards his despised members: but those that were his brethren before, in the time of his abasement, are so still after his exaltation and advancement. Observe lastly, The place where Christ chooses to meet with and speak to his disciples, not in Jerusalem, but in Galilee. *I go before them into Galilee, there shall they see me.* Jerusalem was now a forsaken place, a people abandoned to destruction: Christ would not show himself openly to them, but Galilee was a place where Christ's ministry was more acceptable. Such places wherein Christ is most



welcome to preach, shall be most honoured with his presence. *In Galilee shall they see me.*

11 Now, when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done, 12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Observe here, 1. How the priests and elders endeavour by a notorious lie to hinder the belief of our Lord's resurrection; they suborn and bribe the soldiers to say that his corpse was stolen out of the grave; lies have been an old refuge which the enemies of Christ have all along had recourse unto: lying is an ancient device of Satan. But, Observe, 2. What an improbable and unlikely lie this was, which they put in the soldiers' mouths to vouch; *Say, His disciples came and stole him away while we slept.* Frivolous excuse! carrying with it a most self-evident contradiction. If the soldiers were asleep, how could they discover the disciples stealing away the body? If awake, why did they not prevent their stealing it? Besides, how improbable was it that Christ's few and fearful disciples should attempt to open the sepulchre guarded by soldiers! And as unlikely was it that the soldiers should be all asleep together, and so fast asleep too, that the great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre should be rolled away, and not one of the soldiers awakened with the noise. Infatuation is the certain consequence of desertion of God. Yet observe farther, That this incredible falsehood finds a fast and firm rooting in the belief of the Jews to this day. Note thence, That it is a righteous thing with God to deliver up those to strong delusions, even to the believing of notorious lies, who will not yield their assent to divine truths upon the clearest evidence, and most convincing

demonstration. How strange is it, that such a falsehood as this should find belief among the Jews to this day! But where truth is obstinately rejected, a lie, though never so improbable, is received.

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

The meeting of our Saviour and his apostles upon a mountain in Galilee, was an appointed and general meeting. The mountain is supposed to be that near Capernaum, where he made that famous sermon, called, *The sermon on the mount*: and the meeting is supposed to be appointed as a general rendezvous, for confirming the faith of all his disciples in the certainty of his resurrection. Possibly our Lord appointed this place in Galilee, so far from Jerusalem, that his disciples might without danger come thither to see their Saviour alive again, after his crucifixion. This is judged to be that famous appearance of which St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 6. *When he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.* And those who saw him worshipped him, who before had doubted. Learn hence, That when faith is once satisfied, and sees Christ to be God, it engages the soul to worship him. Divine worship is due to Christ upon the account of his divine nature. No creature can be the object of divine worship, therefore they that worship Christ by praying to him, and yet deny him to be God, are certainly idolaters. If Christ had had an angelic nature, *that* had not made him capable of divine worship: for adoration is founded only in Divinity, and what is but human or angelical is not adorable.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Observe here, 1. A power asserted. 2. An authority delegated. 3. A command enjoined. 4. A promise subjoined. Observe. 1. A power and authority asserted by our Saviour, as belonging to himself: *All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth.* (1.) In heaven, which comprehends a power of sending the Holy Ghost; a power over the angels and all the hosts of heaven, and a power to dispose of heaven to all that shall believe in him. (2.) In earth, which comprehends a power to gather a church out of all nations, and authority to rule, govern, and defend the same against all its enemies. Learn hence, That all power and authority concerning the church of God, was given unto Christ and conferred upon him, upon the account of his meritorious death and triumphant resurrection. *All power is given unto me*: that is, as Mediator: but this power was inherent in him as God from all eternity. Observe, 2. This power delegated by Christ to his apostles: *Go ye, therefore, and teach and baptize all nations; instructing them to observe all things whatsoever I command you.* Here is a threefold power delegated by Christ to his apostles: (1.) To congregate and gather a church, a christian church, out of all the heathen nations throughout the world. Before he had confined them only to Israel; now they must travel from country to country, and proselyte the heathen nations, which before had been taught of the devil, and were led away by his oracles and delusions. *Go, and disciple all nations*, without any distinction of country, sex, or age, whatsoever, and make the gospel-church as large as you can. Thence note, That the apostles and first planters of the gospel had a commission from Christ to go amongst the pagan Gentiles, without limitation; and were not to take up their settled residence in any one nation, but to travel from country to country, instructing them in the saving mysteries of the gospel. The second branch of their power was to baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity: *Baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Where observe, That all adult and grown persons are to be first taught and instructed before they be baptized. But it follows not from hence, that the children of such parents may not be baptized before they are taught: for the apostles were to baptize all nations, of which children are the chief, if not the chiefest part. Besides, those that were proselyted to the Jewish religion, though before they

were circumcised themselves they were instructed in the law of God; yet when they are circumcised themselves, their children were not denied circumcision at eight days old. In like manner we have no reason to deny the children of baptized parents, who are in covenant themselves, the sign and seal of the covenant, which is baptism. God having assured his people *that he will be the God of them and of their seed.* If this privilege be denied, the children of christian parents are in a worse condition than the children of the Jews; and consequently infants are in a worse condition since Christ's coming, than they were before, and the privileges of those that live under the gospel are straiter and narrower than those that lived under the law. Observe farther, In whose name persons are to be baptized: *In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* Where we have a profession of our belief in the Holy Trinity, a dedication of the person to the worship and service of the Holy Trinity, and a stipulation or covenant-promise that we will continue faithful in the service of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to our lives' end. The third branch of the power which Christ delegated to his apostles, was by their ministry to press upon all their converts an universal observance of, and obedience to, all his commands; *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you.* Where note, 1. That preaching is the ordinary and instituted means to convert nations unto God. 2. That preaching must not only go before baptism, but follow after it. Obedience must be pressed upon, and practised by, all those that enter into covenant with God; otherwise they lie under a great condemnation. 3. That preaching of the gospel is a chief part of the minister's work, and no apostle thought himself above that duty. 4. As the apostles did not, so the ministers of Christ ought not to teach any thing but what Christ commands them. 5. As they are to teach what Christ commands them, so they are to teach all things whatsoever Christ commands them: *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you.* Lastly, observe the promise enjoined: *Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world.* That is, I am and will be with you and your successors, lawfully called by my power and authority, by the blessing and assistance of my Holy Spirit. I will be with you to uphold my own ordinance, to protect, and encourage, and reward you, and all your

successors, in the faithful discharge of your trust; and this not for a day, a year, or an age, but to the end and consummation of all ages. Learn thence, That the ministry of the word, and administration of the sacraments, are a standing and perpetual ordinance, to continue in the christian church throughout all ages. Learn, 2. That all the faithful ministers of Christ, in what part of the world soever God shall cast their lot, and in what time soever they shall happen to live, may comfortably expect Christ's gracious presence with their persons, and

his blessing upon their endeavours. *Lo, I am with you, I am always with you, and to the end of the world I will be with you.* Thanks be to Christ for the gracious promise of his spiritual and perpetual presence with his ministers to the end of the world. May this promise cause us to gird up the loins of our minds, increase our diligence, zeal, and fervour, accounting no labour too great, no service too much, no sufferings too severe, so that we may but *finish our course with joy*, and fulfil the ministry we are engaged in! Amen. Amen.

THE

## HOLY GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

## SAINT MARK.

**SAINT MARK**, the writer of this compendious history of our blessed Saviour's life and death, was the disciple and companion of St. Peter; and some affirm, that he wrote his Gospel from St. Peter's mouth; it being dictated by St. Peter, and indited by the Holy Ghost. But since we are assured that the Spirit of God indited the book, we need not trouble ourselves to find out whose hand it was that held the pen.

## CHAP. I.

**THE** beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

The word *Gospel* signifies a message of glad tidings, and intimates to us, that the gospel of the doctrine contains the most gladsome tidings, the most joyful message, that ever was sent from God to mankind: happy tidings concerning our reconciliation with God, and salvation by Jesus Christ. O how highly should we prize, how steadfastly believe, how cordially embrace, these good tidings of great joy! Observe, 2. This gospel is called the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*, because Christ, as God, is the Author of this gospel, and also the principal subject and matter of it. Indeed St. John the Baptist was the first publisher and preacher of the gospel-doctrine, but Christ himself was the first and principal Author, and likewise the chief Subject-matter of it; for whatever is taught in the gospel relates either to the person and offices of Christ, or to the benefits received by him, or the means of enjoying those benefits from him. Observe, 3. How St. Mark styles Christ *the Son of God*, as St. Matthew had styled him before, *the Son of David*; the one sets forth the verity of his human nature, the other the reality of his di-

vine nature; signifying to us, that the true and promised Messias was both God and Man in two distinct natures, and one Person for ever. He is true and real God, as well as the Father and the Holy Ghost; not a mere Man, but God as well as Man.

2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

St. Mark begins his gospel with an account of St. John the Baptist's preaching and ministry, and declares, 1. That the prophets of old, particularly Isaiah and Malachi, did long before foretell the Baptist's message and ministry; that he should go before Christ as his harbinger to prepare the way for him: *Behold, I send my messenger to prepare thy way.* Where note, 1. The dignity and authority of the ministers of Christ: they are his messengers sent by him to deliver his mind and will unto his people. This ministerial mission is twofold, extraordinary and ordinary; the former when God immediately by himself calls men to the holy function; the latter, when he uses the ministry of men in order thereunto. Observe, 2. The work and office of the ministers of

Christ declared, and that is, to prepare people to receive Jesus Christ, offered and tendered to them in the gospel. *Behold, I send my messenger, to prepare thy way before thee.* Learn thence, That the great design and end of the ministry of the word, is, to prepare and fit men for entertaining the holy religion of Christ in their hearts, and to oblige them to walk according to the rules and directions of it in their lives.

**3** The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Here note, 1. The title given to John the Baptist: he is called a *Voice*, in respect of his ministerial office, which was to speak forth, to promulge and publish, the doctrine of salvation. 2. The quantity or kind of this voice, a *crying voice*, the voice of one crying. This implies, 1. His earnestness and vehemency, his zeal and fervency, in preaching. When we lift up our voice, and cry aloud, we speak with earnestness and fervour. When our own hearts are warmly affected with what we preach, we may hope to affect the hearts of our hearers. Why has God commissioned men rather than angels, to be the preachers and dispensers of his word, but because we can speak to and treat with sinners more feelingly and more affectionately than the angels can? 2. This crying of the holy Baptist in his preaching, implies his liberty and boldness, as well as his vehemency and earnestness, in delivering of his message. The lifting up of the voice in speaking, argues boldness and courage in the speaker; as, on the contrary, the depressing of the voice sheweth timorousness. Learn hence, That the ministers of the word are to use both zeal and earnestness, and also courage and boldness of spirit, in delivering the word and message of God, not forbearing to reprove sin, not concealing any part of God's truth, for fear of men's displeasure. Observe, 3. The sum and substance of what he cried, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*; that is, "Make ready yourselves, prepare your own hearts, to entertain the doctrine and glad tidings of the gospel." It is a metaphorical speech, taken from the custom of loyal and dutiful subjects, who, when their prince is coming to lodge in their city, prepare and make ready the way for his coming, by removing every thing that may obstruct

or hinder his progress. Learn hence, That man's heart by nature is very unfit to embrace and entertain the Lord Jesus Christ. We have naturally no fitness, no disposition, no inclination, to believe in him, or to submit unto him. 2. If ever we desire to entertain Christ in our hearts, we must first prepare and make fit our hearts for the receiving and embracing of him. For though the *preparation of the heart be from the Lord*, yet he requires the exercise of our faculties, and the use of our endeavours. He prepares our hearts, by enabling us to the preparation of our own hearts. This is done by getting a sight of the evil of sin, a sense of our misery without Christ, an hungering and thirsting desire after him, a true faith in him. Christ will lodge in no heart that is not thus made ready to receive him.

**4** John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

A twofold account is here given of St. John's execution of his ministry and office: First, his baptizing; secondly, his preaching. *John did baptize*; that is, admit persons into the church, by washing them with water: John baptized into the name of Christ, who was to come; the apostles baptized into the name of Christ, already come. The second part of his office was preaching. Where note, That preaching of the word, and administration of the sacraments, are to go together, and belong only to the ministers of the word, lawfully called. *John did baptize and preach*; but where and what did he preach? The place where, was the *wilderness*; a place not much frequented, though not altogether uninhabited; a solitary, mean, and obscure place. Thither God had called him, and there he contents himself. Learn hence, That the ministers of God must be content to execute their ministry where God calls them, be the place never so mean and obscure, and the people never so rude and barbarous: John was a preacher of great note and fame; Jerusalem the chief city might seem more fit for him; but God had called him to preach in the wilderness, and he would not leave it. We must not leave our place because it is mean and obscure, nor desert our people, thinking them too base to instruct; but where God has called us we must there abide, till he that called us thither remove us thence. Observe farther, As the place where the Baptist

preached, *in the wilderness*, so the doctrine which he preached, namely, *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*; that is, the doctrine of baptism, which sealeth the remission of sins to the party baptized. Learn hence, That the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is absolutely necessary, and the indispensable duty of every gospel-minister. John Baptist preached it, our Saviour preached it, his apostles preached it: *They went out preaching every where that men should repent.* The baptism of repentance (says the learned Lightfoot) belongs to children, though they know not what repentance means, because it engages them to repentance when they come to years to understand that engagement. For thus it was with children circumcised, they became debtors to observe that whole law, though they knew not what the law meant; yet circumcision bound them to it, when they came to years of discretion.

6 And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Here we have an account of the success of St. John's ministry; 1. In the general concourse and resort of the people to it, *All Judea and Jerusalem*; that is, a great many of all degrees and ranks, of all ages and sexes. John was famed for a prophet, and a prophet was now a great rarity. Malachi was the last prophet before John, and he lived about five hundred years before John. Now the excellency of his person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, that the Messiah was come, and the austerity of his life and conversation, all these caused the people to flock unto him. Learn hence, That it is a great encouragement to the ministers of Christ when people show themselves ready and forward to repair unto the places where the word and sacraments are dispensed to them: *All Judea and Jerusalem* attended upon John's ministry. The second fruit of John's ministry was, that the people were ready to receive at his hand the sacrament of baptism: *They were all baptized of him in Jordan.* Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ ought not only to preach the word, but also to dispense the sacraments to their people, even to all that do desire them, and are fit to be partakers of them. A third

fruit of John's ministry was, his hearers' profession of their true repentance, by the *confession of their sins*; as the profession of repentance is requisite in all that are baptized, so a free and voluntary, an ingenuous and impartial, confession of sin, is a good evidence and testimony of the truth and sincerity of our repentance.

6 And John was clothed with camels' hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins: and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

This verse acquaints us with the strictness and austerity of St. John's life in the wilderness; which is laid down in two things; in his mean and frugal apparel, and in his sober and temperate diet. His apparel was rough and *hairy*, and his *girdle of leather*; as Elijah his forerunner was clad before him, 2 *Kings* i. 8. His diet was coarse and ordinary, *locusts and wild honey*; that is, such plain and ordinary food as the wilderness afforded. His example teaches us, That the ministers of the gospel are not to affect either bravery in apparel, or delicacy in diet; but both by their habit and diet set an example of gravity and sobriety before their people; being in these, as well as in other things, an example unto their flocks.

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

Observe here, 1. The high opinion that the Baptist had of Christ. *He is mightier than I*; that is, a Person of greater dignity and excellency by far than myself: whence may be gathered, that though Christ was Man, he was not mere man, but more than man: even very God, equal with his Father; for John Baptist was the greatest of them that were born of women, *Matt.* xi. 11. yet, says he, *Christ is mightier and greater than I.* How so, but in regard to the dignity of his person, being both God and Man in two distinct natures and one person. Observe, 2. The humble and low estimation that the Baptist had of himself: *His shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose*: a proverbial speech, implying that he was unworthy to do the basest and meanest service for Christ. O how well doth humility of mind, an humble apprehension, a low esteem and opinion of themselves and their own gifts and abilities,

become the messengers and ministers of Christ! John was a man of eminent abilities, yet of exemplary humility; he thought himself unworthy to unloose Christ's shoe, or do the meanest office for him.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

John showed the dignity of Christ's person above his own, in the former verse; in this he declares the excellency of Christ's office, and the meanness of his own; I wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of his Holy Spirit. Thence learn, That though the ministers of Christ do by Christ's command dispense the outward ordinance of baptism, yet it is Christ himself, that by the inward work of his Spirit doth make it effectual to such as receive it. *I baptize with water; but he with the Holy Ghost.*

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him: 11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

See the note on *Matt.* iii. 13. Observe here, 1. The great condescension of Christ, in seeking and submitting to the baptism of John: Christ, though he was John's Lord and Master, yea, Lord of heaven and earth, yet cometh to hear John preach, and will be baptized of his messenger. Thence learn, That the greatest persons should neither think themselves too great, nor too good, to come unto the ministers of God, to hear the word from their mouth, or to receive the sacrament at their hand. Christ the Son of God was content to be baptized of John, a mean person in comparison of himself. How dare then the greatest upon earth despise the ministry of man, being appointed by God? Observe, 2. The solemn investing of Christ with the office of Mediator, by a threefold miracle; namely, the opening of the heavens, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and God the Father's voice or testimony concerning his Son; *the heavens were*

*opened*, to show, that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us by Christ's undertaking for us. As Christ opened heaven by his meritorious passion, so he keeps it open by his prevailing intercession. Next, *the Holy Ghost descends like a dove* upon our Saviour. Here we have a proof and evidence of the Blessed Trinity. The Father speaks from heaven, the Son comes out of the water, and the Holy Ghost descends in the likeness of a dove. But why did the Holy Ghost now descend upon Christ? First, for the designation of his person, to show that he was the Person set apart for his word and office of a mediator. Secondly, for the sanctification of his person for the performance of that office. This was Christ's unction, the day on which he was anointed above his fellows to be the King, Priest, and Prophet, of his church: *Isa.* lxi. ver. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he hath anointed me, &c.* Observe, 3. The voice of God the Father pronounced, (1.) The nearness of Christ's relation to himself: *This is my Son.* (2.) The endearedness of his person: *This is my beloved Son.* (3.) The fruit and benefit of his near and dear relation unto us: *In whom I am well pleased.* Hence learn, That there is no possibility for a person to please God out of Christ; neither our persons nor our performances can find acceptance but through him, and for his sake;—that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ground and Cause of all that love which God the Father sheweth to the sons of men. In Christ, God is well pleased with us, as a reconciled Father; out of him, a consuming Fire.

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

*Immediately*, That is, 1. After his baptism. Christ is no sooner out of the water of baptism, but he is in the fire of temptation: such as are baptized with Christ, and entered into the profession of christianity, must look to be assaulted with Satan's temptations. Again, *immediately*, that is, 2. After the Father had declared his complacency in him, and being well pleased with him. Learn thence, That great manifestations of love from God are usually followed with great temptations

from God. *The Spirit driveth him*, that is, the Holy Spirit of God. For the devil is seldom, if ever, called the Spirit, but usually some brand of reproach is annexed, as the evil spirit, or the unclean spirit and the like. *Christ was led by the Spirit*, says St. Matthew, chap. iv. 1. *He was driven by the Spirit*, says St. Mark; that is, he was carried by a strong impulse of the Spirit of God to be tempted by Satan, and did not go of his own private motion to enter the lists with Satan. Teaching us our duty, not to run into or rush upon temptations, without a warrant and call from God. Observe next, The place where Satan assaulted Christ with his temptations: it was a solitary wilderness. No place can privilege us from temptations, or be a sanctuary from Satan's assaults. The solitary wilderness has a tempter in it: yea, Satan oftentimes makes use of men's solitariness to further his temptations; and such as separate themselves from human society, and give themselves up to solitude and retirement, give great advantage to the tempter to tempt them. Observe next, The time and continuance of our holy Lord's temptations; not for an hour, a day, a week, or a month, but for *forty days and forty nights*; not all the time, but very often in that time. Teaching us what we are to expect from Satan; temptations not a few; he will not solicit us once, but often, and follow us with fresh assaults; but the only way to overcome is, as often to resist him. Observe farther, A special aggravation of our Lord's temptations in the wilderness, *He was with the wild beasts*, having no comfort from man, but only wild beasts for his companions, which were more likely to annoy and hurt him, than any way to help and comfort him. Here we have an evidence of the divine power of Christ; who, as Lord of the creatures, can alter and change the nature of the creature at his pleasure; restraining the most savage and hurtful beasts from hurting either himself or any of his people. Observe lastly, The supply sent in to Christ in the hour of temptation: *The angels came and ministered unto him*; food to his hungry body, and comfort to his tempted soul. Learn thence, That those who in the hour of temptation do hold out in resisting Satan, shall find that the power and faithfulness of God will not be wanting to them to send in succour and relief at last. *Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.

In this our Saviour's first beginning to preach the gospel, we have an account of the time when, the place where, and the sum of what, he preached. Observe, 1. The time when our Lord began to preach, and that was *after John the Baptist was cast into prison*. Where note, 1. The undue reward which the ministers of God do sometimes meet with from a wicked world; they are hated, persecuted, and imprisoned, for their courage in reproofing sin: John for reproving Herod's incest was put in prison. Note, 2. John was no sooner in prison, and stopped and hindered from preaching, but Christ began to preach. See the care and kindness of God towards his church, in that he never leaves it wholly destitute of the means of instruction: when some of his faithful ministers are restrained from preaching, he stirreth up others in their room, not suffering all their mouths to be stopped at once. Observe, 2. The place where our Lord first preached, in *Galilee*. The land of Canaan, in our Saviour's time, was divided into three principal provinces: on the south, Judea: on the north, Galilee; in the midst, Samaria. Galilee was divided into the upper and lower Galilee; the higher was called *Galilee of the Gentiles*, because it was the utmost part of the land, and so next unto the Gentiles. In this upper Galilee, Capernaum was the metropolis, or chief; and Chorazin a lesser city. Now much of our Saviour's time was spent in Galilee; he was conceived and brought up at Nazareth, a city in Galilee; he first preached at Capernaum in Galilee; he wrought his first miracle at Cana in Galilee; his transfiguration was upon mount Tabor in Galilee; and our Saviour's ordinary residence was in Galilee. He came into Judea, and up to Jerusalem, only at the feasts: and after his resurrection he appoints his disciples to meet him in Galilee. Only his nativity, his passion, and ascension, were proper to Judea. His nativity at Bethlehem, his passion at Jerusalem, and his ascension upon mount Olivet, hard by Jerusalem. Now all this demonstrates Christ to be the true and promised Messias; for according to prophecy;

the Messiah was to have his presence and principal abode in the province of Galilee, *Mat. ix. 1, 2, 3, &c.* Yet because he was of Galilee, the Jews would not believe him to be the Messiah, saying in scorn, *Can any good thing come out of Galilee?* Whereas our Saviour's habitation and free conversation there, was a proof unto them, and ought to have persuaded them, that according to the prophecy he was the very Christ. Observe, 3. The sum of what our Lord preached, namely, a doctrine, and an exhortation. His doctrine is, *That the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*; that is, that the time foretold by the prophets, when the kingdom of the Messiah should begin, was now come. The exhortation is, *Therefore repent, and believe the gospel.* From the former, note, That the Messiah's coming, or our Saviour's appearing in the flesh, was exactly at the time foretold by the holy prophets: *The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of the Messiah is at hand.* Note, 2. That the great doctrines of repentance and faith are taught only in and by the gospel, and accordingly ought in a special manner to be preached and insisted upon by the ministers of the gospel. The doctrine of Christ, and his ambassadors, is and ought to be the same; they both teach the great doctrines of faith and repentance to a lost world: *Repent, and believe the gospel.*

16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers: 17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. 18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. 19 And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

In this history of our Saviour's calling the four disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, observe these particulars. 1. The meanness of the persons whom he calls, illiterate fishermen: Christ took hereby effectual care that his gospel should

be known to be the power of God, and not the wisdom and device of man; and that the instruments should not carry away the glory of the work. Observe, 2. Christ called his apostles by couples, two and two; first Peter and Andrew, then James and John: thereby signifying to us, that the work of the ministry requires the concurrence of all hands that are called to it. All the ministers of God should join their hearts and hands, and set their shoulders as one man to this great work; and all little enough, God knows, to carry it on with advantage and success. Observe, 3. The work which they are called from, and called to: from being *fishermen*, to be *fishers of men*; from catching fish with the labour of their hands, to catch men with the labour of their tongues. Observe, 4. Our Saviour's command, first to follow him, before they be sent out by him: *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.* We must be Christ's disciples before we are his ministers; his followers, before we are his ambassadors: we must learn Christ before we preach him; otherwise we may fish for a livelihood, but not for souls. Observe, 5. The gracious promise which Christ gives his apostles for their encouragement; namely, to qualify them for, and to succeed them in, their office: *I will make you fishers of men.* Faithfulness and care, diligence and endeavour, is our part; but the blessing and success is Christ's: our labour is only in the cast; Christ's power is wholly in the draught. Some fish cleave to the rocks, others play upon the sands, more wallow in mud; and verily we shall labour all our days and catch nothing, if Christ do not bring our fish to the net, and inclose them in it, as well as assist us in the throwing and casting of it. Observe, 6. The apostles' ready compliance with our Saviour's call. Straightway they forsook their father and friends, ship and nets, and followed Jesus. Whom Christ calls, he calls effectually: and draws whom he calls, and works their hearts to a ready compliance with their duty. Observe, 7. That upon their call to the ministry they leave off their trade, they forsake their ship and nets, and lie close to their ministerial employment. Teaching us, That the ministers of the gospel should wholly give themselves up to their great work, and not encumber themselves with secular affairs and worldly business. Nothing but an indispensable necessity, in providing for a family, can excuse a



minister's incumbering himself with worldly concerns and business.

21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue, and taught, 22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Our Saviour having called his disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, to follow him, in order to their preaching of the gospel; here we may observe how he went himself along with them, teaching personally in the synagogues wherever he came: he did not send his apostles forth as his curates, and lie at home himself upon his couch of ease. What shall we say to those lazy fishermen that set others to the drag, but care only to feed themselves with the fish; not willing to wet their hands with the net, or take any pains themselves? Our Saviour did not thus; but when he sent forth his apostles, he still preached himself: he went into their synagogues and taught. Observe farther, The success of his preaching; the people were astonished at his doctrine, struck with admiration, apprehending and believing him to be an extraordinary prophet, sent from God. Learn thence, That such is the efficacy of Christ's doctrine, especially when accompanied with the energy and operation of his Holy Spirit, that it makes all his auditors admirers; causing astonishment in their minds, and reformation in their manners. Observe lastly, the reason of our Lord's success in preaching: *He taught as one having authority.* He taught in his own name, as being Lord of his doctrine; not saying with the prophets, *Thus saith the Lord*; but *I say unto you.* And he wrought powerful miracles, which accompanied his doctrine. 'As Christ was careful to preserve the authority of his person and doctrine with the people; so is it the duty of his ministers to demean themselves amongst their people, that neither their authority may be contemned, nor their persons despised, but their doctrine and themselves revered and obeyed.

23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of

God. 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace and come out of him. 26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

St. Mark having given an account of our Saviour's doctrine which he preached, verse 15, namely, the doctrine of faith and repentance, he now acquaints us in the remaining part of this chapter with the miracles which he wrought for the confirming of his doctrine, and they are three. First, *The casting of a devil out of one possessed*, verse 23. Secondly, *The curing of Peter's wife's mother of a fever*, verse 29. Thirdly, *The cleansing of the leper*, from verse 40, to the end of the chapter. His first miracle was the casting a devil out of one possessed. *There was a man with an unclean spirit*; That is, an unclean spirit did enter into him, and bodily possess him. Amongst the many calamities which sin has brought upon our bodies, this is one, that we are liable to be bodily possessed by Satan. The devil has an inveterate malice against mankind, seeking to ruin our souls by his suggestions and temptations, and to destroy our bodies by some means or other: but, blessed be God, though his malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; as he cannot do all the mischief he would, so he shall not do all he can. O how much is it our interest, as well as our duty, by prayer to put ourselves morning and evening under the divine protection, that we may be preserved from the power and malice of evil spirits! Observe, 2. The attribute or title given to the devil, he is called *an unclean spirit*. The devils, those wicked spirits of hell, are most impure and filthy creatures; impure by means of their original apostasy; impure by means of their actual and daily sins, such as murder, malice, lying, and the like, by which they continually pollute themselves; impure by means of their continual desire and endeavour to pollute mankind with the contagion of their own sin. Lord, how foul is the nature of sin, which makes the devil such a foul and unclean creature! Observe, 3. This unclean spirit so soon saw Christ, but *he cried out.* Whence note,

That the greatness of Christ's power (being the Son of God) over devils and wicked spirits is such, that it is very terrible and tormenting to them; it was terrible to them in his state of humiliation on earth, and made them then cry out. But oh, how terrible will his power be to them at the great day, when Christ shall come in flaming fire, to render vengeance both to men and devils! Observe, 4. The substance of the devil's outcry; *Let us alone, what have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?* Where note, That though the devils are now as full of sin and discontent as they can be, yet are they not so full of misery and torment as they shall be. *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* says St. Matthew, chap. viii. 29. *Art thou come to destroy us?* says St. Mark: that is to bring upon us our full and final destruction. Implying, that the devil has not yet his full judgment and complete damnation. Therefore there is certainly a day of judgment to come, and the devils are in chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of that great day. But some by these words, *Art thou come to destroy us?* understand as much as, "Art thou come to restrain us from the exercise of our power?" Learn we thence, That the devil thinks himself destroyed when he is restrained from doing mischief. Observe, 5. The title which the devil put upon our Saviour; *Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God*. Although there was ground for the common people's calling Christ, *Jesus of Nazareth*, because he was bred and brought up there, and lived there during his private life, till about thirty years of age; though he was not born there, but at Bethlehem; yet it is conceived that the devil gave this title to our Saviour in policy, to disguise the place of Christ's nativity, that so the Jews might not believe him to be the true Messiah, because he was of Nazareth, whereas the Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem. Therefore to the intent that the Jews might be at the greater loss concerning Christ, and in doubt of his being the true Messiah, the devil here calls him not Jesus of Bethlehem, but *Jesus of Nazareth*. But how comes the next title out of the devil's mouth; *The Holy One of God*? Could an apostle, could Peter himself, make a profession beyond this? But how comes the devil to make it? For no good end or purpose, we may be sure; for he never speaks truth for truth's sake, but for advantage. Probably, (1.) He made this profession, that so he

might bring the truth professed into suspicion, hoping that a truth which received testimony from the father of lies would be suspected. (2.) It might perhaps be done that the people might believe that our Saviour had some familiarity with Satan, and did work miracles by his help, because he did confess him, and seem so much to honour him. From this instance and example learn, That it is possible for a person to own and acknowledge Christ to be the true and only Saviour, and yet to miss of salvation by him. If a speculative knowledge, and a verbal profession, of Christ, were sufficient to salvation, the devil himself would not miss of happiness. Observe, 6. How our Saviour rebukes the devil for his confession, and commands him silence; *And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace*. But why was this rebuke given the devil when he spake the truth? *Ans.* 1. Because Christ knew that the devil confessed this truth on purpose to disgrace the truth. 2. Because the devil was no fit person to make this profession. A testimony of truth from the father of lies is enough to render truth itself suspected. Yet the devil's evidence, that Christ was the holy One of God, will rise up in judgment against the wicked Pharisees, who shut their eyes against the miracles, and stop their ears against the doctrine, of *the Holy One of God*. Observe lastly, How the unclean spirit obeys the voice of Christ, though with great reluctance and regret. *When the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out*. Christ is Lord over the wicked angels, and has an absolute power and authority to overrule them, and command them at his pleasure; if Christ says to the evil spirit, *Come out*, out he must come. Yet observe the devil's spite at parting, *he tears the man*, tortures his body, throws him violently from place to place, showing how loth he was to be dispossessed. Where Satan has once gotten an hold, and settled himself for a time, how unwilling is he to be cast out of possession! yea, it is a torture and vexation to him to be cast out: it is much easier to keep him out than to cast him out. Satan may possess the body by God's permission, but he cannot possess our hearts without our own consent and approbation: it will be our wisdom to deny him entrance into our souls at first, by rejecting his wicked motions and suggestions; for when once entered, he will, like the strong man armed, keep the house till a stronger than he casts him out.

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. 29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell him of her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

The second miracle which our Saviour wrought in this chapter, to confirm the truth and authority of his doctrine, was his raising up of *Peter's wife's mother* from her bed of sickness. Where note, 1. That St. Peter, now a disciple, and afterwards an apostle, was a married person. Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the ministers of the New, did abhor the marriage-bed, nor think themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The church of Rome, by denying the lawfulness of priests' marriage, makes herself wiser than God, who says, Heb. xiii. 4. *Marriage is honourable amongst all men.* Observe, 2. Peter, though a good man, and his wife's mother probably a gracious woman, yet is his family visited with sickness; strength of grace, and dearness of respect even from Christ himself, cannot prevail against diseases. God's own children are visited with bodily sickness as well as others. Observe, 3. The charitable care of St. Peter, and the other disciples, forthwith to acquaint Christ with the condition of this sick person, *Anon they tell him of her.* The care of our fellow-christians, especially when of the number of our near and dear relations, in a time of sickness, is not to be deferred or delayed. Outward help for their bodies, and the spiritual help of our prayers for their souls, are both straightway to be afforded them. Observe, 4. Christ's divine power manifested in this miraculous cure: *He no sooner took her by the hand but the fever left her.* The miracle was not in curing an incurable distemper, but in curing an ordinary distemper after a miraculous manner; namely, 1. By a touch of the hand. 2. The recovery was instantaneous and sudden: *Immediately the fever left her.* 3. The visible effects

of her recovery instantly appeared: *She arose and ministered unto Christ and his disciples.* That she could arise, argued her cure miraculous; that she did arise, and did minister to Christ, argued her thankfulness. Learn thence, That after Christ hath graciously healed any of us, it ought to be our first work and care to administer unto Christ; that is, to employ our recovered health in the service of Christ, and to improve our renewed strength to the honour and glory of Christ.

32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. 33 And all the city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

The evangelist here declares sundry other miracles wrought by our Saviour before the door of St. Peter's house, where he now was; he healed all the diseased that were brought unto him, and cast devils out of them that were possessed with them. But how comes it to pass, that we read of so many possessed with devils in our Saviour's time, and so few either before or since? *Ans.* 1. Probably Satan, perceiving that the Messiah was come in the flesh to destroy his kingdom, did rage the more, and discover great malice and enmity against mankind. 2. Perhaps Almighty God permitted Satan at that time to possess so many, that Christ might have occasion to manifest his divine power by casting Satan out: and accordingly we find our Saviour dispossessing all that were possessed by Satan. It is added, that *he suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.* That is, Christ would not be made known to be the Son of God by the preaching of the devil, to whom it belonged not to publish the gospel, lest the world should take from thence an occasion to think that our Saviour held a correspondence with those wicked spirits, and that the miracles he wrought were performed by the devil's assistance, as being one in combination with him. Possibly from the devil's owning Christ to be the Holy One of God, the Pharisees concluded that there was a compact and agreement betwixt them, and thereupon their affirmation was

grounded, *He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, &c.*

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Observe here, 1. The duty performed by our Saviour, namely, prayer, solitary and private prayer. He went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples. The company of our best friends is not always seasonable, nor acceptable: there are times and cases when a christian would not be willing that his dearest relations upon earth should hear that intercourse which passes betwixt him and his God. Observe, 2. Christ chooses the opportunity of the morning for prayer, *he rises a great while before day* to set about this work. Teaching us, that the morning is a fit season, yea, the best season, for private duties: now our spirits are freshest and our minds freest, before the distractions of the day break in upon us. It is better to go from prayer to business, than from business to prayer.

36 And Simon and they that were with him, followed after him. 37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. 38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Observe here two things: First, the great end of Christ in his incarnation and coming into the world, namely, as a Prophet sent from God to reveal his will, and to publish the doctrine of the gospel. *Therefore came I forth*; that is, to preach and plant the gospel. Secondly, It being Christ's design not only to plant but to propagate the gospel, he would not confine his ministry to any particular places, no, not to the great city of Capernaum, but resolves to preach the word in the smallest towns and villages. Leaving his ministers herein an instructive example, to be as willing to preach the gospel in the smallest villages, as in the largest cities, if God calls them thereunto. Let the place be never so obscure and mean, and the con-

gregation never so small and little, if God sends us thither, the greatest of us must not think it beneath us to go and instruct a handful of people.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. 43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

The last miracle of our Saviour's recorded in this chapter, is the healing of a leper; he came, beseeching Christ to heal him, saying, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Where observe, 1. He doth not question Christ's power, but distrusts Christ's willingness to heal him; *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.* Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed, by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him. Observe, 2. The great readiness of Christ to help and heal this distressed person. *Jesus touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.* By the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched, therefore Christ's touching the leper showed him to be above the law, and that he was the Lord of it, and might dispense with it; and his healing the leper by the word of his mouth, and touch of his hand, showed him to be truly and really God. Leprosy among the Jews was an incurable distemper, called *the finger of God*, a disease of his sending, and of his removing. Our Saviour therefore, as a proof of his being the true Mes-

siah, tells John's disciples, *Matt. xi. 5.* that *the lepers were cleansed, and the dead raised* by him; which two being joined together, do imply, that the cleansing of lepers is as much an act of divine power as the raising of the dead. And accordingly, *2 Kings v. 7.* it is said, *Am I God, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy?* Observe, 3. The certainty and suddenness of the cure was a proof of Christ's divine power; *immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Christ not only cured him without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ showed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness. Observe, 4. The cause, moving our Saviour to cure this leper; his bowels were moved with tender pity and compassion towards him. Christ's exercising acts of mercy and compassion, with such condolency and sympathizing pity, should by way of example teach us to be inwardly moved with tender compassion and mercy towards such as are in misery. We are not only to draw out our bread, but to draw out our soul, to the hungry. Observe, 5. A twofold charge and command given by Christ to the leper after his cure. First, to conceal and tell it to no man. Where the great modesty, humility, and piety of Christ, is discovered, together with the care of his own safety. His modesty, in not desiring his good deeds should be published and proclaimed; his humility, in shunning vain-glorious applause and commendation; his piety, in desiring all honour and glory should redound entirely to God. And the care of his own safety appeared, lest the publishing of his miracles should create him untimely danger from the Pharisees. The second part of the charge given to the recovered leper, was, *to show himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them;* that is, to testify to the Jews, that he did not oppose the ceremonial law, which required a thank-offering at his hand, and that he was the true and promised Messiah. Learn thence, That our Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed so long as the time for its continuance did endure; though he came to destroy that law, yet, whilst it stood, he would have it punctually observed. Observe, 6. Notwithstanding our Saviour's strict prohibition, the leper publishes the

fame of this miracle. It is likely his intention might be good, in extolling his great Benefactor; but his acting contrary to Christ's command was a fault, and shows the corruption of human nature, in being most forward to that which is most forbidden. It is a sin to do any thing against the command of Christ, though with never so good a meaning, purpose, and intention, to exalt and honour Christ. Observe lastly, The inconveniences which attended our Saviour upon this indiscreet publication of the miracle; and they were two: 1. Our Saviour *could no more enter into Capernaum*, and other cities, to preach in an open manner, as he had done, by reason of the great concourse of people after him. 2. The fame of this miracle brought the people about him *from all quarters*; not so much to hear as to see; not so much to hear his holy and heavenly doctrine which he taught, as to gratify their curiosity with the sight of the miracles which he wrought. O how many thronged after Christ, more to have their bodily diseases cured, than their souls healed! Christ desired not their flocking after him upon this account; therefore he retires from the breath of popular applause: he would not *openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places.* O how great humility! How little did our blessed Redeemer regard the applause and commendation of men! Constantly we find him, as soon as his public preaching and working of miracles was over, withdrawing himself from the multitude into some private place apart: he doth not stay in the crowd with his ear open to listen how men admire the preacher, and applaud the sermon. Plainly showing, that he sought his Father's glory, not his own praise or the people's commendation; leaving his example as an instructive pattern to all his ministers and ambassadors, to take heed of vain-glory; not to affect popularity, or to seek the applause and commendation of men in what they do, resolving that man's opinion shall be nothing with them, but that the pleasing of God, and doing their duty to the souls of their people, shall always be their whole scope.

#### CHAP. II.

AND again he entered into Capernaum after *some days*; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2 And straightway many

were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

In the last verse of the foregoing chapter we find how industriously our blessed Saviour withdrew himself from the concourse and throng of people which flocked after him from every quarter; and to show how little he affected the applause and commendation of the multitude, *he left the cities and was without in desert places.* Hereby giving his ministers an instructive example to decline vain-glory, and to shun popular applause. But now the words before us show that our Saviour having entered (privately, as is probable) *into the city of Capernaum*, it is presently noised and reported that *he was in the house*, and a mighty concourse and throng of people are after him; insomuch that neither the house, nor hardly the streets, could contain them. Thence learn, That such as least seek after honour and applause from men, are oft-times most famous and renowned. Our Saviour was so far from seeking the people's praise and commendation, that he came into Capernaum without observation, and betook himself to his dwelling-house there: but the more he sought to lie hid, the more he was taken notice of. Honour flies from them that pursue it, and pursues those that fly from it. The way to be honoured, is to be humble. God seldom honours a proud man, by making him either eminently serviceable or successful. Observe farther, The people being come together, our Saviour takes the opportunity to preach: *And he preached the word unto them.* Teaching his ministers by his example, to embrace all opportunities, in season and out of season, on the Lord's day and on the week day, to edify our people by our ministry, by our public exhortations, by our private instructions, prudent admonitions, and holy examples.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, *Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk*? 10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11 I say unto thee, *Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.* 12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Here we have the relation of our Saviour's miraculous healing of one sick of the palsy at Capernaum. Where observe, 1. The diseased and distressed person; *one sick of the palsy*, which disease being a resolution and weakness of the nerves, enfeebles the joints, and confines the person to his bed or couch. As a demonstration of Christ's divine power, he was pleased to single out the palsy and leprosy, incurable diseases, to work a cure upon such as were afflicted with them. Now this person was so great a cripple by reason of the palsy, that he was borne of four. He could not go, nor was capable of being led, but was carried by four in his bed or couch. Observe, 2. As the grievousness of the disease, so the greatness of their faith. The man and his friends had a firm persuasion that Christ was clothed with a divine power, and able to help him, and they hoped in his goodness that he was also willing to help him. Accordingly, the roof of the Jewish houses being flat, they uncovered some part of it, and let the bed down with the sick man in it into the room where Christ was. Observe, 3. No sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, but Christ

exerts his divine power in healing. And see the marvellous efficacy of faith; it obtained not only what was desired, but more than was expected. They desired only the healing of the body, but Christ heals body and soul too. *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Thereby our Saviour shows them, that sin is the original cause of all bodily diseases; and consequently, that in sickness, the best way to find ease and deliverance from pain, is first to seek for pardon. The sense of pardon in some degree will take away the sense of pain. Observe, 4. The exception which the scribes took against our Saviour for pronouncing that this man's sins were forgiven him. They accuse him of the sin of blasphemy: urging, that it is God's peculiar prerogative to pardon sin. Their doctrine was true, but their application false. Nothing more true, than that it is the greatest degree of blasphemy for any mere man to arrogate to himself the incommunicable prerogative of God, which consists in an absolute and authoritative power to forgive sin. But then their denying this power to Christ of forgiving sin, which he had as God from all eternity, and as Mediator, God and man in one person, when here upon earth; this was blasphemy in them; the challenging of it, none in him. Observe, 5. Our Saviour gives these scribes a twofold demonstration of his Godhead, (1.) By letting them understand that he knew their thoughts: *Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they reasoned within themselves.* To search the hearts, and to know the thoughts and reasonings of men, is not in the power of angels or men, but the prerogative of God only. (2.) By assuming to himself a power to forgive sin: for our Saviour here, by assuming to himself a power to forgive sins in his own name, and by his own authority, doth give the world an undeniable proof and convincing evidence of his Godhead. *For who can forgive sins but God only?* Observe, 6. The effect of this miracle upon the minds of the people; they marvelled and were amazed, but did not believe. They admire our Saviour for an extraordinary man, but did not believe him to be God. Learn thence, That the sight of Christ's miracles is not sufficient to work faith in the soul, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit. The one may make us marvel, the other must make us believe.

: 13 And he went forth again by the sea-side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. 15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. 16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? 17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Observe here, 1. The unwearied pains and diligence which our Saviour used in the execution of his ministerial office and calling; no sooner had he done preaching in Capernaum, and healing the sick of the palsy, but he goeth out thence to the sea-side to preach there. O blessed Saviour! How perpetually wert thou employed in the labours of thy calling, in the service of thy Father, and for the good of mankind! Thou wentest about doing good, setting a pattern for all thy ministers to follow. How doth the example of thy laborious diligence at once instruct and shame us! Observe, 2. The number of our Lord's disciples not being filled up, observe what a free and gracious, unexpected and undeserved, choice he makes. *Levi*, that is, *Matthew*, (for he hath both names,) a grinding publican, who gathered the taxes for the Romans, and was probably guilty, as others were, of the sins of covetousness, extortion, and oppression; yet he is called to follow Christ as a special disciple. Learn thence, That such is the freeness of God's grace, that it calls and converts sinners unto Christ when they think not of him, nor seek unto him. Little did Levi now think of a Saviour, much less seek after him, yet he is at this time called by him. *Matthew*, a publican,

Zaccheus, an extortioner, Saul, a persecutor, all these are brought home to God, as instances and evidences of the mighty power of converting grace. Observe, 3. Matthew's ready compliance with Christ's call; *he arose, and followed him*. When the inward call of the Holy Spirit accompanieth the outward call of the word, the soul readily complies, and presently yields obedience to the voice of Christ. Christ oft-times speaks by his word to our ears, and we hear not, we stir not; but when he speaks by his Spirit efficaciously to our hearts, Satan shall not hold us down, the world shall not keep us back, but we shall with Levi instantly arise and follow our Saviour. Observe, 4. Levi, or Matthew, to show his thankfulness to Christ, makes him a great feast. Christ invited Matthew to a discipleship, Matthew invites Christ to a dinner. The servant invites his Master, a sinner invites his Saviour. We do not find, that when Christ was invited to any table, that he ever refused to go: if a publican, if a Pharisee invited him, he constantly went; not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good. Christ feasts us when we feast him. Learn hence, That new converts are full of affection towards Christ, and very expressive in their love unto him. Matthew, touched with a sense of Christ's rich love, makes him a royal feast. Observe, 5. The civil and exception which the scribes and Pharisees made at our Lord's free conversation. They censure him for conversing with sinners; he justifies himself, telling them, that he conversed with them as their physician, not as their companion. *They that are whole need no physician, says Christ, but they that are sick*. As if our Lord had said, "With whom should a physician converse, but with his sick patients? Now I am come into the world to do the office of a kind physician unto men, surely then I am to take all opportunities of conversing with them, that I may help and heal them, for they that are sick need the physician: but as for you scribes and Pharisees, who are well and whole in your own opinion and conceit, I have no hopes of doing good upon you: for such as think themselves whole desire no physician's help." From this assertion of our Saviour these truths are suggested to us, 1. That sin is the soul's malady, its spiritual disease and sickness. 2. That Christ is the Physician appointed by God for the cure and healing of this disease. 3. That there

are multitudes of sinners spiritually sick, who yet think themselves sound and whole. 4. That such, and only such, as find and feel themselves spiritually sick, are the subjects capable of Christ's healing. *They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the (opiniatively) righteous, but the (sensible) sinner to repentance*.

18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. 22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles, else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Observe here, 1. A great difference betwixt John's disciples and Christ's in the matter of fasting. John's disciples imitated him, who was a man of an austere life, and much given to fasting; therefore he is said *to come neither eating nor drinking*, Matt. xi. 18. On the other side, Christ's disciples follow him, who *came eating and drinking*, as other men did; and yet, though there was a great difference betwixt John's disciples and Christ's in matters of practice, they were all of one faith and religion. Thence learn, That there may be unity of faith and religion among those who do not maintain an uniformity in practice. Men may differ in some outward religious observances and customs, and yet agree in the fundamentals of faith and religion. Thus did John's disciples and Christ's; the one fasted often, the other fasted not. Observe, 2. In that the disciples of the Pharisees used to fast as well as



John's disciples, we may learn, That hypocrites and wicked men may be, and sometimes are, as strict and forward in the outward duties of religion, as the holiest and best of christians: they pray, they fast, they hear the word, they receive the sacraments: they do, yea, it may be, they out-do and go beyond, the sincere christian in external duties and outward performances. Observe, 3. The defensative plea which our blessed Saviour makes for the not fasting of his disciples: he declares that it was neither suitable to them, nor tolerable for them, thus to fast at present. Not suitable, in regard of Christ's bodily presence with them. This made it a time of joy and rejoicing, not of mourning and fasting. Christ is the Bridegroom, and his church the bride; whilst therefore his spouse did enjoy his bodily presence with her, it was a day of joy and rejoicing to her, and mourning and fasting were improper for her. But when Christ's bodily presence shall be removed, there will be cause enough to fast and mourn. Again, this discipline of fasting was not at present tolerable for the disciples; for they were raw, green, and tender, not fit for austerities; nor could bear as yet the severities of religion, no more than an old garment could bear a piece of new stiff cloth to be set into it, which will make the rent worse, if the garment comes to a stretch; or no more than old bottles can keep new wine. As if our Saviour had said, "My disciples at present are tender and weak, newly called and converted; they cannot therefore bear the severities of religion presently; but ere long I shall leave them, and go to heaven, from whence I will send down the Holy Spirit upon them, which shall enable them to do all the duties which the gospel enjoins." Now the intended lesson of instruction from hence is this, That it is hurtful and dangerous for young converts, for weak christians, to be put upon the severer exercises of religion, or to be urged to the performance of such duties as are above their strength. But they ought to be handled with that tenderness which becomes the mild and gentle dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour here commends prudence to his ministers in treating their people according to their strength, and putting them upon duties according to their time and standing.

23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn-fields on the sabbath-day; and his disciples

began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath-day that which is not lawful? 25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? 26 How he went into the house of God, in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? 27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Observe here, 1. The poverty, the low estate and condition, of Christ's own disciples in this world; they wanted bread, and are forced to *pluck the ears of corn* to satisfy their hunger. God may, and sometimes doth, suffer his dearest children to fall into straits, to taste of want, for the trial of their faith, and dependence upon his power and providence. Observe, 2. How the Pharisees (who accompanied our Saviour only with a design to cavil at, and quarrel with, every thing that either he or his disciples did) blame this action of the disciples, namely, the plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day. Yet note, (1) It was not any theft which the disciples were charged with; for to take in our necessity so much of our neighbour's goods as we may reasonably suppose that, if he were present, and knew our circumstances, he would give us, is no theft. But it is the servile labour on the sabbath, in gathering the ears of corn, which the Pharisees scruple. Whence observe, How zealous hypocrites are for the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the greater, and are superstitiously addicted to outward ceremonies, placing all holiness in the observation of them, neglecting moral duties. Observe farther, 3. How our Saviour defends the action of his disciples in gathering the ears of corn in their necessity, by the practice and example of David. Necessity freed him from fault and blame in eating the consecrated bread, which none but the priests might lawfully eat. For in cases of necessity a ceremonial precept must give way to a moral duty.

Works of mercy and necessity for preserving our lives, and for the better fitting us for sabbath-services, are certainly lawful for the sabbath-day. Observe, 4. A double argument which our Saviour uses, to prove that the sabbath's observation may be dispensed with in a case of absolute necessity; 1. Drawn from the end of the sabbath's institution: *the sabbath was made for man*; that is, instituted of God for the good and benefit of mankind, both with respect to their souls and to their bodies. The outward observing and keeping of the sabbath is subordinate to the good of man, and therefore the good of man is to be preferred before the outward keeping of the sabbath. 2. Argument is drawn from the authority which Christ, the Institutor of the sabbath, has over it. *The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath*: that is, he has authority and power, both as God and as Mediator, to institute and appoint a sabbath, to alter and change the sabbath, to dispense with the breach of it upon a just and great occasion; and consequently, acts of mercy, which tend to fit us for works of piety, not only may, but ought to be done upon the sabbath-day: which was the proposition which our Saviour undertook to prove.

## CHAP. III.

**A**ND he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath-day; that they might accuse him. 3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

The former part of this chapter reports to us a miraculous cure wrought by Christ upon a man who had a withered hand. The place where he wrought it, was the synagogue; the time when, was the sabbath-day; the manner how, was by speaking a word; the persons before whom, were the envious and malicious Pharisees. These men were always cavilling at our Saviour's doctrine, and slandering his miracles; yet our Saviour goes on with his work before their faces, without either interruption or discouragement. Learn thence,

That the unjust censures and malicious cavils of wicked men against us for well-doing, must not discourage us from doing our duty, either towards God, or towards our neighbour. Though the Pharisees watched our Saviour, and when their envy and malice could find no occasion of quarrel, they could invent and make one; yet such was our Lord's courage and resolution, that he bids *the man which had the withered hand, stand forth*: to show that he was resolved to heal him, notwithstanding their malicious purpose to accuse him for it as a breaker of the sabbath. Opposition met with in doing our duty, must not discourage us from doing good, if we will follow the example of our blessed Redeemer.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Observe here, 1. The Pharisees' sinful and graceless disposition, and that was hardness of heart. The heart of man is naturally hard, and full of obstinacy and enmity against Christ: but there is an acquired hardness, which continuance in sin occasions; the Pharisees laboured under both. Observe, 2. A double affection which this hardness of heart found in the Pharisees did stir up in Christ; namely, anger and indignation, grief and commiseration: *He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts*. Learn hence, 1. That human passions are not sinful, and that the christian religion doth not destroy natural affections. 2. That anger at sin, either in ourselves or others, if kept within its due bounds, is not only lawful but commendable. This passion of anger was found in him, in whom was no sin. 3. That our anger against sin ought to be accompanied with grief and compassion towards sinners. We should pour out our tears of compassion, when men pour forth their abominations. 4. That of all sins, hardness of heart and unbelief are most grievous and offensive, most displeasing and provoking to Jesus Christ: *He looked about with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts*. Observe, 3. The sudden and instantaneous cure which our Saviour wrought upon the man that had the withered hand: our Saviour did not touch him, but only said to him, *Stretch forth thy hand,*

and it was presently cured. Learn hence, That Christ's having absolute power over all bodily diseases and infirmities, to cure them miraculously without means, only by a word speaking, is one argument that proves him to be truly and really God.

6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him. 7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, 8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. 10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Observe here, 1. What dismal effects this famous miracle of Christ had upon the Pharisees and Herodians. Instead of being convinced by it, they conspire against him for it. These Herodians and Pharisees were of different opinions, enemies to one another, yet they join together in seeking the death of Christ. The Pharisees were against paying tribute to Cæsar, looking upon themselves as a free people, and accounting the Roman emperor an usurper. The Herodians were for it. Herod being made by the Roman emperor king of the Jews, was zealous for having the Jews pay tribute to Cæsar; and such of the Jews as sided with him, particularly his courtiers and favourites, were styled Herodians; but both Pharisees and Herodians take counsel against Christ. Learn thence, That unity and consent is of itself alone far from being a mark and note of the true church. Unity in the faith and doctrine of Christ, and in the profession and practice of the true religion,

is a note indeed of the true church: but unity in opposing Christ, his person, his doctrine, his people, is so far from being a mark of the true church, that it is the badge of the antichristian synagogue. Observe, 2. The prudent means which our Saviour uses to preserve himself from the rage of the Pharisees, *he withdrew himself from them.* Christ's example teaches his ministers their duty in a time of danger to fly from persecution, and to endeavour to preserve their lives, unless when their sufferings are like to do more good than their lives. Observe, 3. The great zeal and forwardness of the people in flocking after our Saviour's ministry: people come now at first from all places and countries, from Judea, from Idumea, from beyond Jordan, from Tyre and Sidon, to hear his doctrine, and see his miracles. The people came from all parts when our Saviour first began to preach. His ministers find it thus: at their first coming amongst a people their labours are most acceptable, and they do most good; our people's affections are then warmest, and perhaps our own too. Observe, 4. What sort of people they were which attended thus zealously upon our Saviour's ministry, they were the common and ordinary people; *the poor received the gospel*; whilst the Pharisees, and other men of most account, the mighty, the noble, and the wise men after the flesh, despised our Saviour's person, slighted his ministry, and sought his life. The ordinary and meanest sort of people ever have been more zealous and forward in embracing the gospel, than ever the great, and the rich, and the honourable part of the world have been. It is a sad but a certain truth, heaven is the place where few, comparatively, of the great men of the world, are like to come; their temptations are many, their lusts are strong, and their great estates, through their own abuse, become fuel to their lusts. Observe, 5. The behaviour of these unclean spirits (the devils) towards our Saviour, and our Saviour's carriage towards them: they fall down at the very sight of him, they cry out, and confess him to be the Son of God; but he sharply rebukes them, and charges them that they should not make him known. Not that our Saviour would have the knowledge of his person suppressed, but because the devils were not fit persons to preach Jesus Christ. A truth out of the mouth of the father of

ties, is enough to render truth itself suspected. Besides, the time appointed for the full and clear manifestation of the Godhead of Christ was not yet come. This was not to be done till after his resurrection; the divine nature was to be hid under the veil of Christ's flesh, during his state of humiliation and abasement.

13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth *unto him* whom he would; and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16

And Simon he surnamed Peter: 17 And James the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; (and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is,

The sons of Thunder;) 18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas,

and James the *son* of Alpheus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

As the Jewish church arose from twelve patriarchs, so the christian church became planted by twelve apostles. The person commissioning them was Christ; none may undertake the work and calling of the ministry, but those whom Christ appoints and calls. The persons commissioned were disciples before they were apostles; to teach us, that Christ will have such as preach the gospel to be disciples before they are ministers; trained up in the faith and doctrine of the gospel, before they undertake a public charge. Observe farther, The holy preparative which our Saviour uses in order to this election of his apostles; he goeth up into a mountain to pray upon that great occasion. So says St. Luke, chap. vi. 12. *He went up into a mountain to pray, and spent the night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples, and of them he chose twelve.* In this prayer no doubt he pleaded with his Father to furnish all those that were to be sent forth by him with all ministerial gifts and graces. Learn thence, That as prayer is a necessary preparative to all duties, so more especially before the public election and ordination

of the ministers of the church: solemn prayer is to be used by such as are to ordain and choose them: our Lord's practice is to be a standing rule herein to all church-officers. Observe again, Though Christ called his apostles now, yet he did not send them forth now: *He ordained twelve that they should be with him.*

That is, that they might converse with him, and be eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of his life, doctrine, and miracles. And having been thus with Christ, and fitted and prepared for him for their work, afterwards they went forth. Thence learn, That such as are to take upon them the office of the ministry, ought first to be fitted and prepared for it, then solemnly called to it, before they enterprize and undertake the execution of it: if the apostles here, who were called and qualified extraordinarily, were to spend some time with Christ to receive direction and instruction from him before they went forth to preach; how much more needful is it for such as are ordinarily called, to be well fitted and furnished for the ministerial service, before they undertake it! Observe next, How the several names of the apostles are here registered and recorded: God will honour those that honour him, and are the special instruments of his glory. Of these apostles Peter is named first, and Judas last. Peter is named first, because probably elder than the rest, or because for order sake he might speak before the rest. From whence may be inferred a primacy, but no supremacy; a priority of order, not a superiority of degree. As the foreman of a grand jury has a precedence but no pre-eminency; he is first in order before the rest, but has no authority or power over the rest. Judas is named last, with a brand of infamy upon him; that he was a traitor, the person that betrayed his Lord and Master. Whence learn, That though the truth of grace be absolutely necessary to a minister's salvation, yet the want of it doth not disannul his office, nor hinder the lawfulness of his ministry. Judas, though a traitor, was yet a lawful minister. The mission of a person may be valid, though he be not sanctified. Observe lastly, That our Saviour surnamed James and John, *Boanerges*, the Sons of Thunder. St. Jerome thinks this name was given them, because being with Christ in the mount at his transfiguration, they heard the Father's voice out of the cloud like thunder: others think them so called, because they were more

vehement and earnest than the rest in preaching, and did with greater zeal and power sound forth the doctrine of the gospel like thunder. It is very probable, that Christ gave them this name from a foresight of the heat and zeal of their temper, of which they soon gave an instance, in desiring fire to come down from heaven to consume the Samaritans.

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. 22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. 23 And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. 28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Observe here, 1. How truly our Lord's words were verified, John iv. 34. *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*: for he and his apostles going into an house to refresh themselves in their hunger, the people pressed upon him so fast to hear the word, that he regards not the satisfying of his hunger, but applies himself to instruct the people. Lord! how exemplary was thy zeal and diligence in preaching the everlasting gospel to a lost world! As it is instructive to, may it be imitated and

followed by; all thy ambassadors. Observe, 2. The rash censure of our Saviour's friends, that is, his kinsmen, concerning this action, in neglecting to eat bread, and suffering the multitude thus unreasonably to press upon him. They conclude, he is beside himself, out of his right mind; and accordingly went out to lay hold upon him. Learn hence, (1.) That the forward zeal and diligence of Christ and his ministers in preaching the gospel, is accounted madness and frenzy by a blind world. But they may say with the apostle, *2 Cor. v. 13. If we be beside ourselves it is to God*. But who were persons that thus looked upon our Saviour as beside himself? Verily his own kindred and relations according to the flesh. Learn hence, (2.) That oft-times the servants of God meet with the strongest temptations from, and are most discouraged and molested by, such as are their nearest relations by blood or alliance. This is a great trial, to find our relations setting us back, instead of helping us forward, in the ways of religion; but we must bear it patiently, knowing, that not only others of God's children, but Jesus Christ, his own and only Son, did experience this trial. Observe, 3. The malicious and wicked slander which the scribes endeavoured to fix on our blessed Saviour; namely, that he was possessed by the devil, and by a familiarity with him, and help from him, cast forth devils out of others. Good God! how was thine own and only Son, the holy and innocent Jesus, censured, slandered, and falsely accused of the worst of crimes: of gluttony, of blasphemy, of sorcery! Can any of thy children expect freedom from the persecution of the tongue, when innocency itself could not protect thy holy Son from slander and false accusation? Observe, 4. Our Saviour's answer, and just apology for himself, in which are contained, (1.) A confutation of their calumny and slander. (2.) A reprehension of the scribes for the same. To confute this slander, our Saviour, by several arguments, shows how absurd and unlikely it is that the devil should cast out himself, and any way seek to oppose and destroy his own kingdom. As if our Saviour had said, "Is it likely that Satan would lend me his power to use it against himself? Surely Satan will do nothing to weaken his own interest, or shake the pillars of his own kingdom. Now if I have received any

power from Satan, for destroying him and his kingdom, then is Satan like a family divided within itself, and like a kingdom divided against itself, which can never stand, but be brought to desolation." Our Saviour having sufficiently shown that he did not work his miracles by the power of the devil, he next informs them from whence he had that power, even from God himself; and accordingly he compares Satan to a strong man well armed, with weapons to defend his house; and he compares himself, clothed with divine power, to one that is stronger than the strong man. So that the argument runs thus: The devil is very strong and powerful, and there is no power but God's only that is stronger than his. If then, says Christ, I were not assisted with a divine power, I could never cast out this strong man, who reigns in the bodies and souls of men as in this house, for it must be a stronger than the strong man that shall bind Satan; and who is he but the God of strength? Learn hence, That Christ's divine power only is superior to Satan's strength. He only can vanquish and overrule him at his pleasure, and drive him out of that possession which he holds either in the bodies or in the souls of men. Observe, 5. The charge which our Saviour brings against the scribes and Pharisees' blaspheming his divine power in working miracles. He charges them of sinning the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. *All sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness.* As if Christ had said, "All the reproaches which you cast upon me as man are pardonable; as when you check me with the poverty and meanness of my birth, when you censure me for a wine-bibber, a glutton, a friend and companion of sinners, and the like unjust crimes. But when you blaspheme that divine power by which all my miracles are wrought, and, contrary to the conviction of your own enlightened minds, maliciously ascribe all my miracles to the power of the devil, which were wrought indeed by the power of the Holy Ghost, this makes your condition not only dangerous but desperate, because you resist the last remedy, and oppose the best means for your conviction. For what can be done more to convince you that I am the true and promised Messiah, than to work so many miracles before your eyes to that purpose? Now, if when you see these you will say, It is not the Spirit of God that works these, but the power of the

devil: as if Satan would conspire against himself, and seek the ruin of his own kingdom; there is no way or means left to convince you, but you will continue in your obstinacy, and malicious opposition to truth, to your unutterable and inevitable condemnation."

31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. 32 And the multitude sat about him; and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. 33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? 34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Observe here, 1. The truth and verity of Christ's human nature; he had affinity and consanguinity with men, persons near in blood to him by the mother's side, called here his brethren; that is, his kinsmen. Observe, 2. That the mother of Christ, though she was a blessed and holy woman, yet she was not free from sin, but failures and infirmities are found with her. It was a fault to interrupt our Saviour unreasonably at this time, when he was preaching to the people. The like we see in her at other times, *Luke ii. 48, and John ii. 3.* No saint here on earth ever was in a state of sinless perfection. Blessed be God, we are hastening to such a state. Observe, 3. That Christ did not neglect his holy mother, or disregard his poor kindred and relations, but only showed that he preferred his Father's work and business before their company and acquaintance at this time. Observe, 4. How exceedingly dear obedient Christians are to Jesus Christ; he prefers his spiritual kindred before his natural. Alliance by faith is more valued by our Saviour than alliance by blood. To bear Christ in the heart, is a greater honour than to bear him in the womb. Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is not denied us even now. Although we cannot see Christ, yet love him we may. His bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual presence is not denied us. Though Christ be not ours in house, in arms, in affinity, in consanguinity; yet in heart, in faith, in love, in

service, he is, or may be ours. Verily, spiritual regeneration bringeth men into a more honourable relation to Christ than natural generation ever did.

#### CHAP. IV.

**A**ND he began again to teach by the sea-side : and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea ; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

The foregoing chapter acquainted us with the blasphemous slander which the scribes and Pharisees cast upon our blessed Saviour, accusing him of casting out devils by the help of the devil. This they did, no doubt, to discredit his person, and hinder his ministry ; yet for all this the people follow him in great multitudes, more than ever, to hear him, and be instructed by him. Thence learn, 1. That all the power and malice of Satan and wicked men shall not be able to suppress the gospel, or hinder the free course of it ; yea, the more it is opposed, the more it shall prevail : the more the scribes and Pharisees disgraced our Saviour, and vilified his doctrine, the more the people followed him in troops, to be partakers of his ministry. Observe, 2. The place where our Lord now preached ; *in a ship*. Not that he declined the temple, or the synagogue, when he had opportunity ; but in the want of them Christ thought an house, a mountain, a ship, no unmeet place to preach in. It is not the place that sanctifies the ordinance, but the ordinance that sanctifies the place. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's gestures in preaching ; *he sat*, it being the custom of the Jewish church so to do, Matt. xxiii. 2. *The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' chair*. Learn thence, That in indifferent rites and orders, touching the outward worship of God, we are to conform ourselves to the laudable custom and practice of the church in which we live, and whereof we are members. This did our Saviour, and so ought we. Observe, 4. The manner of our Lord's preaching, it was by parables and similitudes, which was an ancient way of instructing among the Jews, and a very convincing way ; working upon men's minds, memories, and affections, all at once, making the mind attentive, the memory retentive, and the auditors inquisitive after the inter-

pretation of the parable. Some are of opinion our Saviour's parables were suited to his hearers' employments ; and accordingly many of his hearers being husbandmen, he resembles his doctrine to seed sown in the field. For thus he speaks :

3 Hearken ; Behold, there went out a sower to sow : 4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth ; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth : 6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched ; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

1. Several things are to be observable ; as,  
1. How Christ begins and ends the parable with an admonition to diligent and serious attention. *Hearken*, says Christ, verse 3. and *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear*, verse 9. This shows us at once the people's backwardness and negligence in applying their minds to hear and receive the word of God, and also shows the minister's duty to excite and stir up their people's diligence and attention in hearing God's word. Observe, 2. What is the general scope and design of this parable : namely, to show that there are four several sorts of hearers of God's word, and but one good one, but one sort only who hear to saving advantage. Now as to the matter of the parable. Note, (1.) *The sower* is Christ and his apostles ; he the principal sower, they the subordinate seedsmen. Christ sows his own field, his ministers sow his field. He sows his own seed, they his seed. Woe unto us if we sow our own seed, not Christ's. Note, (2.) The seed sown, the word of God : fabulous legends and unwritten traditions, which the seedsmen of the church of Rome sow, these are not seed, but chaff, or their own seed, and not Christ's. Our Lord's field must be all sown with his own seed, with no mixt grain. Learn, 1. That the

word preached is like seed sown in the furrows of the field. As seed has a fructifying virtue in it, by which it increases and brings forth more of its own kind, so has the word of God a quickening power to regenerate and make alive dead souls. Learn, 2. From this parable, that the seed of the word, where it is most plentifully sown, is not alike fruitful. Seed doth not thrive in all ground alike, neither doth the word fructify alike in the souls of men. There is a difference both from the nature of the soil, and from the influence of the Spirit. For though no ground be naturally good, yet some is worse than other. Learn, 3. That the cause of the word's unfruitfulness is very different; not the same in all. In some it is an hard heart to unbelief, in others the distracting cares of the world choke the word: like thorns which hinder the corn's growth, by overshadowing it, by drawing away the moisture and heart of the earth from it, and by hindering the influence of the sun from cherishing it. Unto which may be added the policy of Satan, that bird of prey, which follows God's plough, and steals away the precious seed of the word out of the furrows of their souls. Learn, 4. That the best ground doth not bring forth increase alike. Some good ground brings forth more, others less; some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred-fold. In like manner, a person may be a profitable bearer of the word, although he doth not bring forth so great a proportion of fruit as others, provided he brings forth as much as he can.

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. 11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but upon them that are without all *these* things are done in parables: 12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them. 13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

Observe here, The disciples' question, and our Saviour's reply. Their question is about the sense and meaning of the parable. They own their ignorance, and desire better

information. It is no shame for the best of ministers, yea, the best of men, to acknowledge their own ignorance in the mysteries of religion, and to attend upon the means of instruction, in order to their further information. In our Saviour's answer, *To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, &c.* observe, 1. That the doctrines of the gospel are great mysteries. 2. That it is a matchless and invaluable privilege practically to understand gospel-mysteries. 3. That this privilege all are not sharers in, and partakers of, but only those to whom it is given. 4. That it is a righteous thing with God, to give such persons over to farther blindness and ignorance in spiritual things, who wilfully reject the truth, and shut their eyes against the light and evidence of it. The Pharisees had all along shut their eyes, and said they would not see: and now Christ closes their eyes judicially, and says they shall not see. *Seeing ye shall see, and not perceive; and hearing ye shall hear, and not understand.*

14 The sower soweth the word.

15 And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness! 17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. 18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. 20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Here our Saviour applies himself to interpret and explain the foregoing parable: the seed is the word, the sower is the preacher, the soil is the heart and soul



of man. Some hearers Christ compares to the *highway* ground, in which the seed lies uncovered for the want of the harrow of meditation. Others to *stony* ground, in which the word has no root. No root in their understandings, in their memories, wills, and affections: but they are instantly offended, either at the depth and profoundness of the word, or at the sanctity and strictness of the word, or else at the plainness and simplicity of it. Again, some hearers our Lord compares to *thorny* ground: worldly and covetous desires are as thorns choking the good seed: they shadow the blade when sprung up, keep off the influences of the sun, and draw away the fatness of the soil from the seed. All these mischievous effects have thorns among the seed. And the like ill effects have worldly affections and covetous desires in the soul of man, rendering the seed of the word unfruitful and unprofitable. But the good christian hears the word attentively, keeps it retentively, believes it stedfastly, applies it particularly, practises it universally, and brings forth fruit perseveringly. Learn, 1. That no hearers are in Christ's account good hearers of the word, but such as bring forth fruit answerable to their hearing. 2. That a person may be a good hearer of the word in Christ's account, if he bring forth the best fruit he can, though it be not in so great a proportion as others do. As some grounds bring forth thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold; in like manner do all sincere hearers of the word. They all bring forth fruit, though not all alike; all in sincerity, though not all equally, and none to perfection. It is Theophylact's note on the place: "How small is the number of good men, and how few are saved! For only the fourth part of the seed fell upon good ground, and was preserved." Others observe a gradation here: the seed sown in the highway comes not up at all; that on stony ground comes up, but increaseth not; that among thorns increaseth, but bears no fruit; only that seed which fell on good ground brings forth fruit unto perfection.

21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? 22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing

kept secret, but that it should come abroad. 23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

Observe here, 1. The end and design of Christ in revealing his word and will to his disciples, and in communicating to them the light of spiritual knowledge; namely, that they may communicate it to others, and not keep it close unto themselves. Even as the candle in a house diffuses and disperses its light to all that come within the reach of it; in like manner ought all christians, and particularly Christ's ministers, by the light of life and doctrine, to direct persons in their way towards heaven. Such as are enlightened by God in any measure, with the knowledge and understanding of his word, ought not to conceal and hide this knowledge within themselves, but communicate it to others, and employ it for the good and benefit of others. Observe, 2. The cautionary direction given by Christ to his disciples, *to take heed how they hear the word*. Such as would profit by hearing of the word must diligently attend to the matter of the doctrine which they hear, and also to the manner how they hear. Such is the majesty and authority of the Person that speaks to us in the word, such is the sublimity and spirituality of the matter, and so great is our danger, if we miscarry under the word, that it nearly concerns us to *take heed*, both *what we hear*, and *how we hear*. Observe, 3. The argument which our Saviour makes use of to quicken his disciples to communicate the knowledge, and improve the grace they had received for the good and benefit of others. *To him that hath shall be given*. That is, such as improve their spiritual gifts shall have them increased; such as improve them not shall have them blasted. Learn hence, That the best course we can take to increase and thrive in grace, is to exercise and improve it. He that hides his talent, doth not only forfeit it, but is in danger of being punished severely for the non-improvement of it.

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground ; 27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. 28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

This parable of our Saviour's is an instructive lesson to the ministers of the gospel, faithfully to do their parts in sowing the seed of the word amongst their people, and then not to be over-solicitous about the event, but to leave the issue to God ; not to be discouraged, though the fruit of their labour doth not presently appear. Accordingly Christ propounds the laborious husbandman to his ministers' imitation. As the husbandman, when he has prudently and painfully cast his seed into the ground, is not anxiously disquieted, but goes to bed, and rests in hope, and at length the corn springs up ; first the blade, then the ear, then the grain. In like manner let the ministers of God do their duty without discouragement ; in the morning sow their seed, and in the evening not withhold their hand. And although the seed sown doth not appear presently, (it may be not in our days,) but seems rotting among the clods ; yet may it appear afterwards with a plentiful increase, when our own heads are laid among the clods ; verifying that saying of our Saviour, *One soweth, and another reapeth*. Learn hence, 1. That the ministry of the word is the ordinary, the necessary, and the principal means which God has appointed for sowing the seed of grace in the hearts of his people: *So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground*. 2. That the virtue and efficacy of the word preached doth not depend upon the parts of a man, but upon the power of God ; *The seed springeth up, he knoweth not how*. Learn, 3. That the word of God sincerely preached may be successful, though it be not presently successful ; the seed sown in one minister's days, may spring up in another's. Happy we, if as God's husbandmen we be employed in plowing, sowing, or reaping ;

our Lord will reward us *secundum laborem, non fructum* ; not according to our success, but according to our endeavours. The care and endeavour is ours, but the blessing and success is God's.

30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God ? or with what comparison shall we compare it ? 31 *It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth : 32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches ; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.* 33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. 34 But without a parable spake he not unto them : and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

The design of our Saviour in this parable is to show how the gospel-church, from small and little, from unlikely and contemptible beginnings, should spread and increase, fructify and grow up, like as mustard-seed, one of the smallest of grains, grows up to a considerable tallness ; even so Christ foretells that the gospel should spread and increase, nations and countries becoming christians. Hence learn, That how small beginnings soever the gospel had in its first plantation, yet by the fructifying blessing of God it has had, and shall have a wonderful increase.

35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. 37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow : and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish ? 39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace,

be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Observe, here, 1. Our Saviour and his disciples no sooner put forth to sea, but dangers attend and difficulties do accompany them; a tempest arose, and the ship was covered with waves, which Christ himself was in, with his disciples. Learn hence, That the presence of Christ himself does not exempt his disciples and followers from trouble and danger. Here is a great tempest about the disciples' ears, though Christ himself was in their company. Observe, 2. The posture our Saviour was in when this tempest arose: he being wearied with the labours of the day, was laid down upon a pillow to sleep at night, thereby showing himself to be truly and really man, and that as he took upon him human nature, so he assumed the infirmities of our nature also, as weariness and pain, hunger and thirst. Observe, 3. The disciples' application made to Christ; they awake him with a sad outcry, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* Here was faith mixed with human frailty. They believed that he could save them; but being asleep, they concluded he must be awaked before they can be saved by him: whereas, though his human nature was asleep, yet his divine nature neither slumbered nor slept. Learn hence, That the prevalence of fear in a time of great and imminent danger, though it may argue weakness of faith, yet is no evidence of a total want of faith; in the midst of the disciples' fears they believed Christ's power. Observe, 4. A double rebuke given by our Saviour, first to the winds, next to the fears of his disciples: *He rebukes the winds, and instantly they are calm.* When the sea was as furious as a madman, Christ with a single word calms it. Learn hence, That the most raging winds, and outrageous seas, cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ. Christ, as God, lays a law upon the most lawless creatures, even when they seem to act most lawlessly. Observe farther, Christ rebukes his disciples' fears, *Why are ye fearful?* No sooner was the storm up, but their fears

were up; they forgot that the Lord High Admiral of the Ocean was on board the ship: and were as much overset with their boisterous passion as the vessel was with the tempestuous winds; and accordingly Christ rebukes the tempest within, before the storm without. First he calms their hearts, then he quiets the seas. From this instance of the disciples we may gather, that great faith in the habit may appear little in act and exercise: the disciples' faith in forsaking all and following Christ, was great faith; but in this present act their faith was weak, through the prevalency of their fears. O, the imperfect composition of the best of saints! Faith and fear will take their turns, and act their parts, whilst we are upon the stage of this world; ere long our fear will be vanquished, and our faith swallowed up in vision. Lord, set our souls a longing for that joyful hour.

#### CHAP. V.

AND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes: 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any *man* tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he came and worshipped him, 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not. 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, *thou* unclean spirit. 9 And he asked him, What *is* thy name? And he answered, saying, My name *is* Legion: for we are many. 10 And he besought him

much that he would not send them away out of the country. 11 Now there was there, nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding. 12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and were choked in the sea. 14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15 And they came to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 16 And they that saw it told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. 18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

This piece of history gives us a very sad relation of a person that was possessed with a legion of devils: we read of few, if any, in the Old Testament, that were thus possessed, but of many in the New Testament. Our Saviour came into the world to destroy the works of the devil; therefore he suffered Satan to enter some human bodies, to show his divine power in casting him out. Note here, 1. That the evil angels by their fall lost their purity, but not their power; for with God's permission they have power, not only to enter into men's bodies, and

to possess them, but also to distemper their minds, and drive them to frenzy and madness, causing them to offer violence to their own lives and to do hurt and mischief to their own bodies. Thus did this possessed person here, wounding and cutting himself with stones. Note, 2. That the reason why the evil angels do no oftener exert their power in doing mischief to the bodies and lives of men, is from the restraining power of God. The devils cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can. Note, 3. The place where these evil spirits delighted to make their abode; among the tombs or graves, places desolate, forlorn, and solitary, which are apt to breed horror of mind, and give advantage to temptations. Learn thence, That it is dangerous, and very unsafe, for persons, especially in whom melancholy prevails, to give themselves to solitariness, to frequent desolate and forlorn places, and to affect the being much alone; it giving advantage to Satan to set upon them with powerful temptations. It is better to frequent human society, and especially to delight in the society and communion of the saints, by means whereof we may be more and more strengthened and fortified against Satan's temptations. Note, 4. That the devils own Christ to be the Son of God, and that he came into the world to be a Saviour, but not a Saviour to them; therefore they cry out, *What have we to do with thee*, or thou with us? O what an uncomfortable confession and acknowledgment is this, to own Christ to be a Saviour, and at the same time to know that he is none of our Saviour! Note, 5. That though the devils do own Christ to be the Son of God, and do pay homage and worship, and yield service and subjection to him, as his slaves and vassals, yet it is not a free and voluntary service, but extorted rather, and forced from them by the power of Christ: *He worshipped, and cried out, saying, What have I to do with thee?* Note, 6. What a multitude of evil spirits do enter into one man. O the extreme malice and cruelty of the devil against mankind, in that so many evil spirits did at once afflict and torment a single person; even a *legion*, many thousands of them. Observe also, The unity and agreement which is amongst these evil spirits in doing mischief: though there was a legion of them in this one person, yet they have all but one name. Learn, That the very devils have a sort of unity

amongst themselves, and in their malice and mischievous designs against mankind they are as one. How happy were it, if good men were as much united in designs and endeavours for the glory of God, as devils conspire and combine against it! Note, 7. The outcry which the devil makes at the appearance and approach of Christ, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* From thence learn, (1) That there are tortures appointed to the spiritual natures of evil angels. (2) That the devils are not so full of torment as they shall be. Although they are as full of discontent as they can be, there will be a time when their torments shall be increased, when they shall have their fill of torment. This they know, and accordingly thus they pray, *Torment us not before our time*; that is, increase not our torments before the appointed time of their increase. Note, 8. The devils' request, *Not to send them out of the country*, ver. 10: for being now among heathens, they thought they were among their own, and not in Christ's jurisdiction, as being not amongst his people. Next, for permission and leave to go into the herd of swine. Where observe, First, The devil's malice; he will hurt the poor beasts rather than not hurt at all. Secondly, His powerful restraint; he cannot hurt a pig without permission: *Suffer us to enter*. Satan's malice indeed is infinite, but his power is bounded; it is *potestas sub potestate*, a power under a power. If he could not hurt the swine, much less can he afflict the body or soul of man without leave or licence. Note, 9. How Satan's request is yielded to by our Saviour: he permits the devils to enter into the swine; not to satisfy their desire in doing mischief; but, first, to show his power over the devils, that they could do nothing without his permission: next, to show how great the power and malice of the devil would be, if not restrained: and lastly, That the miracle of casting out such a multitude of devils might appear to be the greater. Learn hence, That sometimes Almighty God, for wise ends and just causes, doth suffer the devil to enjoy his desire in doing hurt and mischief unto the creatures: *Jesus said unto them, Go*. Note, 10. What a contrary effect this miracle which Christ wrought had upon these people; instead of believing his divine power, upon the sight of his miraculous healing the possessed, the loss of their swine enrages them, and makes them de-

sire Christ to depart from them. Carnal hearts prefer their swine before their Saviour, and had rather lose Christ's presence than their worldly profit. So desirous were these Gadarenes to get rid of our Saviour's company, *that they pray and beseech him to depart out of their coasts*. Learn hence, Sad is the condition of such from whom Christ departs; more sad the condition of such who say unto Christ, Depart; but most sad the case of them who pray and beseech Christ to depart from them. Thus did these Gadarenes desire and beseech Christ to depart from them; which accordingly he did, and we read no more of his return to them. Note lastly, How desirous the possessed man was to continue with Christ: after he was come to himself, *he prayed that he might be with him*. This he might desire, partly to testify his thankfulness to Christ, partly out of fear of being re-possessed again by Satan, or perhaps to have the opportunity of hearing Christ's doctrine, and seeing his miracles. For such as have once *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, and experienced the pleasure and profit of Christ's company, are very desirous of the continuance of it, and exceeding loth to part with it. However, our Saviour at this time did not think fit to suffer him, knowing that more glory would redound to God, by publishing the miracle to his friends. Christ expects, after eminent deliverances wrought for us, that we should be the publishers of his praise, and declare to all, far and near, the great things which God hath done for us. Add to this, that our Saviour might not permit this man to be with him, to avoid the suspicion of vain-glory; of which he might have given some umbrage, had he carried about with him those upon whom his greatest miracles were wrought. And lastly, To show that Christ in his absence, as well as when present, is able to protect those that believe and trust in him from the malice of evil spirits.

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea. 22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, 23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I

*pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.* 24 And *Jesus* went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

Observe here, 1. The person who came to Christ on behalf of his sick daughter, described by his name, *Jairus*; by his office, *a ruler of the synagogues*; by his gesture, *he fell down at Jesus's feet and worshipped him*. This gesture of his was not only a sign of tender affection in him towards his daughter, but also an evidence of his faith in our blessed Saviour; yet his confining Christ's power to his bodily presence, and to the touch of his hand, was a token of the weakness of his faith: *Come, says he, and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live.* As if Christ could not have cured her without either coming to her, or laying his hand upon her. Note, All that come to Christ are not alike strong in faith. Yet our blessed Redeemer refuses none who come to him with a sincere faith, though in much weakness of faith. Observe, 2. How readily our Saviour complies with Jairus's request; *Jesus went with him*. Although his faith was but weak, yet our Saviour doth not reject him, or deny his suit, but readily goes with him. Learn hence, How ready we should be to go to Christ in all our distresses, afflictions, and necessities, who is so ready to hear, and so forward to help us, if we seek him in sincerity, though our faith be feeble. Observe, 3. The great humility of our blessed Saviour in suffering himself to be thronged by poor people: *Much people followed him, and thronged him*. O humble and lowly Saviour! How free was thy conversation from pride and haughtiness: how willing to converse with the meanest of the people for their advantage! Our Lord did not only suffer them to come near him, but even to throng him. What an example is here for the greatest persons upon earth to imitate and follow, not to despise the persons, nor disdain the presence of the meanest and poorest of the people; but to look upon some with an eye of favour, upon others with an eye of pity, upon none with an eye of contempt.

25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bet-

tered, but rather grew worse, 27 When she had heard of *Jesus*, came in the press behind, and touched his garment: 28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. 29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of that plague. 30 And *Jesus*, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? 31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

As our Saviour was on his way to Jairus's house, a diseased woman comes behind him, touches his clothes, and is presently healed. The virtue lay not in her finger, but in her faith; or rather in Christ, which her faith instrumentally drew forth. Observe here, 1. The diseased person, a woman with a bloody flux. Let women here take notice of the miseries which the sin of the first woman has brought upon all women, amongst which this is one, that it has made their bodies subject to unnatural issues and fluxes of blood. Observe, 2. The long continuance of this disease, *twelve years*. It pleases God to lay long and tedious afflictions upon some of his children in this life, and particularly to keep some of them a very long time under bodily weakness, to manifest his power in supporting them, and to magnify his mercy in delivering them. Observe, 3. This poor woman was found in the use of means; she sought to physicians for help, and is not blamed for it, though *she spent all she had upon them*. The use of physic is not to be neglected by us in times of sickness, especially in dangerous diseases of the body. To trust to means is to neglect God, and to neglect the means is to tempt God. The health of our bodies

ought to be dear and precious to us, and all lawful means to be used, both to preserve it, to recover it, and confirm it. Observe, 4. The workings and actings of this poor woman's faith: her disease was unclean by the ceremonial law, and therefore to be separate from society; accordingly she is ashamed to appear before Christ, but comes behind him to touch his clothes, being firmly persuaded that Christ had a power communicated by God unto him, miraculously to cure incurable diseases. And see how our Saviour encouraged her faith, though she did not believe him to be the eternal Son of God, but one to whom God has communicated a power of healing bodily diseases; yet, says Christ, *This thy faith hath made thee whole*. Learn hence, That faith oft-times meets with a better welcome from Christ than it did or could expect. This poor woman came to Christ trembling, but went away triumphing. Observe, 5. Christ would have this miracle discovered; he therefore says, *Who touched me?* and, *I perceive that virtue is gone out of me*. First, in reference to himself, to manifest his divine power, that by the touch of his clothes he could cure such incurable diseases. Secondly, in relation to the woman, that she might have an opportunity to give God the praise and glory for the cure. And thirdly, With respect to Jairus, that his faith might be strengthened in the belief of Christ's power to raise his daughter. Now from those words, *virtue went out of Christ*, and he healed them, it is evident, that the virtue which did these miraculous cures resided in Christ, and was not communicated to him; and consequently proves him to be God; for the divine virtue, by which the prophets and apostles did their cures, is ascribed to God; as *Acts* xix. 11. *God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul*. But the miracles done by Christ are ascribed to the divine virtue dwelling in him. Accordingly here he says, *I perceive virtue is gone out of me*.

35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. 37 And he suffered no

man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. 38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth: 40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. 42 And straightway the damsel arose and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Observe here, 1. The doleful news brought to Jairus's ears, *Thy daughter is dead*. The Lord doth sometimes suffer the faith of his saints to be hard put to it, greatly assaulted with difficulties and trials. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's seasonable word of comfort, *Be not afraid, only believe*. Christ is ready to comfort believers in the hour of their strongest temptations and greatest trials. Observe, 3. Christ's application of himself to the raising unto life Jairus's dead daughter. In order to which, 1. He goes into the house only with three of his disciples, which were sufficient to witness the truth of the miracle. Our Saviour, to avoid all show of vain-glory, and to evidence that he sought not ambitiously his own honour and praise, would not work this great miracle publicly before all the people. 2. He rebukes them for the show they make of immoderate grief and sorrow for the dead damsel: they wept and wailed greatly, with minstrels and musical instruments, according to the custom of the heathens, who by a mournful sort of music did stir up the passion of grief at their funerals. To mourn immoderately for the dead is an

heathenish practice and custom. It is hurtful to the living, and dishonourable to the dead; nor is it an argument of more love, but an evidence of less grace. 3. He adds a reason for this rebuke and reproof given them; *The damsel is not dead but sleepeth. Vobis mortua, mihi dormit*: "She is dead to you, but asleep to me;" not so dead as to be beyond my power to raise her to life. Souls departed are under the conduct of angels to their several regions of bliss or misery. It is very probable that the soul of this damsel was under the guard of angels, near her dead body, waiting the pleasure of God in order to its disposal, either to restore it again to the body, or to translate it to its eternal mansion. Observe farther, The nature of death in general, and that of the saints in particular, described; *it is a sleep*. Sleep is a state of rest; sleep is a sudden surprisal; in sleep there is an insensible passage of our time; the person sleeping shall certainly awake, either in this world, or in the next. It will be our wisdom to prepare for the bed of the grave, and so to live, that when we lie down in it, there may be nothing to disturb our rest. Observe next, The words which our Saviour used at the raising of the damsel, *Talitha-cumi*, Syriac words, to show the truth of the miracle, not like a conjurer, muttering a charm in unknown words to himself; and also to show the greatness of the miracle, that he was able to raise her by a word speaking. Observe lastly, The charge given by our Saviour not to divulge this miracle: *He charged them straitly that none should know it*. That is, not to divulge it imprudently to such of the scribes and Pharisees as would not be convinced by it, but only cavil at it, and be the more enraged against him, and seek his death before his time was come. Also not to divulge it unseasonably, and all at once, but gradually, and by degrees: for it was the will of God that the divine glory of Christ should not be manifested to the world all at once, and on the sudden, but by little and little, during his state of humiliation; for his resurrection was the time appointed for the full manifestation of his Godhead. Rom. i. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.*

## CHAP. VI.

**A**ND he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. 2

And when the sabbath-day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. 4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. 5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching.

Our blessed Saviour having in the former chapter wrought two famous miracles, in curing a woman of her bloody issue, and raising Jairus's daughter from death, we find him here in the beginning of this chapter passing into his own country, that is, the city of Nazareth in Galilee, called his own city and country, because he was there conceived, there brought up; there Joseph and Mary, and his kindred dwelt, and Christ with them, during his private life, which was till he was thirty years of age. Now our Saviour being come into his own country; observe, 1. What his employment was: he preached in their synagogues, and held communion with the Jewish church, although she had many corruptions in her. Teaching us, by his example, not to desert and forsake the communion of such a church, in which there is found neither heretical doctrine nor idolatrous worship, although many things be found in her culpable and blame-worthy. The Jewish church was certainly such, and yet our Saviour maintained not occasional only, but constant communion with her. Observe, 2. The influence and effect which our Saviour's preaching had upon his own countrymen, the people of Nazareth: it did work admiration in them, but not faith; *they were astonished*, but did not believe. Men may be mightily moved and affected



by the word, and yet may never be converted by it: the men of Nazareth wondered, and yet were offended: they did not believe in him, but were offended at him. Observe, 3. The ground and cause of this their offence, and that was, the meanness of his extraction, and the poverty of his condition: *Is not this the carpenter?* From whence the ancient fathers, particularly Justin Martyr, concluded, that our Saviour did work at his father Joseph's trade, during his father's life, and thence was called *the carpenter's son*; and when Joseph was dead, (which was before Christ was thirty years old, when he entered upon his public office,) he was then called *the carpenter*. The ancients say, he spent his time in making ploughs and yokes, and that thence it was he drew so many similitudes in his preaching from the yoke and the plough. This we are sure of, that our Lord lived not thirty years before his manifestation idly and unprofitably. It is most probable that he followed his father's calling, and wrought under him, it being said, that *he was subject to him*, Luke ii. 15, as a child to a parent, and as a servant to his master. Add to this, that it seems not only true, but requisite, that Christ should be of some trade, because by the Jewish canons all fathers were bound to teach their children some trade; yea, says the learned Dr. Whitby, their most celebrated Rabbins thought it a great reproach not to be of some trade: doubtless our Lord, during his private life, did give no example of idleness. Indeed, after he entered upon his prophetic office, he no longer followed Joseph's calling, but applied himself wholly to the work of the ministry: he made no more ploughs, but one to break up hard hearts; no more yokes, but one for the devil's neck. However, in regard to our Saviour's low extraction and mean education, *his countrymen were offended at him*. Learn hence, That the poverty and meanness of Christ's condition, was that which multitudes stumbled at, and which kept many, yea most, from believing on him. None but a spiritual eye can discern beauty in a humbled and abased Saviour. Learn, 2. That it is the property and practice of profane men to take occasion, from the outward quality and condition of God's ministers, both to despise their persons, and to reject their doctrine. Observe, 4. The reason assigned by our Saviour why the men of Na-

zareth despised him and set him at nought, because he was their countryman and acquaintance: their familiarity bred contempt. Teaching us, That very often the faithful ministers of God are most contemned and dishonoured where they are most familiarly known. Sometimes the remembrance of their mean original and extraction, sometimes the poverty of their parents' condition, sometimes the indecencies of their childhood, sometimes the follies of their youth, are ripped up; all which are occasions of contempt, and gave ground for this proverbial saying, *That a prophet is not without honour save in his own country*. Which, like other proverbial speeches, holds true in the general, and that for the most part it is so, but it is not universally true in all persons and cases. However, this good use may be made of our Saviour's observation, to teach his ministers to be wise in conversing with their people, not to make themselves cheap and common in every company, not too familiar with all sorts of persons, nor to be light and vain in any company; for this will certainly breed contempt, both of their persons and ministry. Our duty is, by strictness and gravity of deportment, to maintain our esteem in the consciences of our people, and to temper gravity with condescending affability. That minister who prostitutes his authority, frustrates the end of his ministry, and is the occasion of his own contempt. Observe, 5. How this people's contempt of Christ's person, and unbelief of his doctrine, did hinder Christ from working miracles among them: *He could do no mighty works there*. Not because he was unable, but because they were unwilling. Not as if their infidelity abated his divine power, but they were unprepared to receive any benefit by him; his miracles would have been cast away upon such invincible persons. Who will sow upon barren sands, or water dead plants? It was an act of justice in Christ to deprive the Pharisees of those advantages which they had so long resisted. Christ had a natural ability to do mighty works there, but no moral ability. He could not do it honourably, their unbelief was a moral hinderance; so then this inability proceeded from no deficiency in Christ's power, but from a defect in their faith. He could not, because he would not; and he would not, because it was not fit for him so to do. Although Christ be omnipotent,

and has all power in his hands, yet unbelief binds his hands, and hinders him in the execution of that power. Unbelief is such a sin, as keeps men from being partakers of the benefits of Christ. Observe, 6. How the incredulity and unbelief of this people was so great, that Christ wondered at it: *He marvelled because of their unbelief.* Not because he was ignorant of the cause of it, but because he had used such marvellous means for the curing them of their unbelief. Learn hence, That unbelief is a great sin at all times; but when marvels are wrought for the cure and healing of it, and it remains uncured, it is a marvellous sin, and justly causes admiration and wonder in Christ himself: *He marvelled because of their unbelief.*

7 And he calleth *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; 8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse: 9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. 10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. 11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. 12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

We heard before, chap. iii. of our Saviour's solemn calling his apostles to their work and office: now he sends them forth to execute their office. Where observe, 1. The person that sends them forth; Christ. Learn thence, That none ought to take upon them the office of preaching, or any other ministerial function in the church, till thereunto lawfully called by Christ himself. The apostles were immediately called and sent forth by Christ himself, and received the doctrine which they taught immediately

from Christ's own mouth. His ministers now are called mediately, they receive their authority from Christ by the hands of the governors of his church. Observe, 2. The manner of their sending, by two and two in a company: partly to make their message of more authority; partly to testify their mutual consent in the doctrine which they taught; and partly to comfort and encourage, to help and strengthen, to assist and support each other: in imitation of this example, the Jesuits send forth their emissaries by pairs. Learn hence, That the ministers of the word do stand in great need of the mutual help and comfort, of the united assistance and encouragement of each other, in the weighty duties of their calling and function; like labourers in the harvest-field, they should help one another, the strong endeavouring to strengthen the hands of the weak. But, Lord, what tears are sufficient to bewail the want of love and unity, yea, the prevalency of that fear and malignity which is found too often amongst the ministers of the gospel! So that instead of going forth by two and two, happy is he that is alone in a place. Well might Melancthon bless God, when he lay a-dying, that he was going to a place where he should be freed from the implacable hatred of divines. This is, and ought to be, for a lamentation. Observe, 3. The power given by Christ to work miracles for confirming the doctrine of the gospel which his apostles preached; he gave them power over unclean spirits, and they cast out devils, and anointed with oil them that were sick, and healed them. This power to work miracles was necessary for the apostles; partly to procure reverence to their persons, being poor and unlearned men, but principally to gain credit and authority to their doctrine; for the doctrine of faith in the Messiah, as now come, and exhibited in the flesh, being a strange and new doctrine to the Jews, the truth and certainty of it was to be extraordinarily ratified by Christ's and his apostles' miracles, some of which were casting out of devils; and by anointing with oil, to heal and recover sick persons. This gift of healing remained some time in the church, as appeared by St. James v. 14. *Is any sick? Anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.* Where observe, That the apostles did not use oil as the instrument and means of healing, (for then the cure had not been miraculous,) but only as a symbol of the cure, or as an outward sign

and testimony of miraculous healing : which outward sign was for the strengthening of the faith of such as were healed : assuring them, that as certainly as their bodies were anointed, so certainly should their health and strength be restored. The Papists upon this ground their sacrament of Extreme Unction ; but very vainly : for the apostles anointed those that were sick, as a sign of their recovery ; but the Papists anoint those that have the pangs of death upon them, that their sins may be blotted out, and the snares of the devil avoided. Observe, 4. The charge given by Christ to his apostles at the time of their sending out. This is threefold : first, Touching their preparation for their journey, he bids them not take much care, nor spend much time in furnishing themselves with victuals, money, apparel, weapons of defence, and the like ; only taking a walking-staff in their hands, because they were to finish their journey speedily, and to return again to Christ. This command of our Saviour to his apostles, not to incumber themselves when going forth to preach the gospel, teaches his ministers their duty, to free themselves as much as possibly they can from worldly incumbrances, which may hinder them in the performance of their office and function, 2 Tim. ii. 4. *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.* Secondly, Touching their lodging in their journey. Our Saviour advises them not to change it, during their stay in one place ; but *into whatsoever house they first entered, they should there continue till they departed out of that place* ; that so they might avoid all show of lightness and inconstancy, and testify all gravity and staydness in their behaviour, this being a special mean to win authority to their persons and ministry. Thirdly, Christ gives a charge to his apostles touching their carriage towards such as should refuse to give entertainment to them and their doctrine. They were to denounce the judgments of God against such contemners, *by shaking off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them.* Thence learn, That the contempt of God's ministers, and especially of their ministry and doctrine, is an odious and execrable sin, detested by God, and which ought to be abhorred by man : *Shake off the dust of your feet.* This action was emblematical, signifying that Almighty God would in like manner shake them off as the vilest dust. Learn, 2. That wherever the word

is preached, it is for a testimony ; either for or against a people. For if the dust of a minister's feet bear witness against the despisers of the gospel, their sermons much more. Observe, lastly, The dreadful judgment denounced by our Saviour against the contemners of the apostles' doctrine : *Verily it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.* Where note, 1. That there shall be a day of judgment. 2. That in the day of judgment some sinners shall fare worse than others. 3. That of all sinners the condition of such will be saddest at the day of judgment who having lived under the gospel, have died after all in impenitency and infidelity : *Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

14 And king Herod heard of him ; (for his name was spread abroad ; ) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded : he is risen from the dead. 17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife ; for he had married her. 18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. 19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him ; but she could not. 20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him ; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. 21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birth-day made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief *estates* of Galilee ; 22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king

said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. 23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. 24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me, by and by in a charger, the head of John the Baptist. 26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. 29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

The history of John the Baptist's death is here recorded by this evangelist, as St. Matthew had done before, chap. xiv. 1, 2. Here we have these particulars further observable; 1. The character and description of a zealous and faithful minister. He is one that deals plainly, and dares tell the greatest persons of their faults. Herod, though a king, is reproved by the Baptist for his incest, in taking his brother's wife. The crown and sceptre of Herod could not daunt the faithful messenger of God. There ought to meet in the ministers of God both courage and impartiality. Courage, in fearing no faces; impartiality, in sparing no sins. Observe, 2. Who it was that commanded the Baptist to be beheaded. It was *Herod the king, whom he had reproved*. How sad is it when kings, who should be nursing fathers to the church, do prove the bloody butchers of the prophets of God! The severest persecutions which the prophets of God have fallen under, are usually occasioned by their telling great men of their crimes. Men in power are impatient of reproof, and imagine that their authority gives them a licence to transgress. Observe, 3.

The time of the Baptist's death; it was upon Herod's birth-day. It was an ancient custom among the eastern kings to celebrate their birth-days: Pharaoh did so, *Gen. xl.* and Herod here, but both with blood; yet these personal sins do not make the practice unlawful, when we solemnize our birth-days with thankfulness to our Creator and Preserver, and recommend ourselves by prayer to his gracious providence and protection for the remainder of our days; this is an act of piety and religion. But Herod's birth-day was kept with revelling, with feasting, with music and dancing: all which were made sinful to him by the circumstances which did attend it. Great men's feasts and frolics are too often the season and occasion of much sin. Observe, 4. The instigators and promoters of the holy Baptist's death: *Herodias and her daughter*. Lord, how deadly is the malice of souls debauched with lust! Imprisonment would not satisfy them, they must have his blood. Resolute sinners, who are mad upon their lusts, run furiously upon their opposers, and resolve to bear down all opposition they meet with in the gratification of their unlawful desires. Observe, 5. With what great reluctance Herod consented to this villany: *The king was exceeding sorry*. Wicked men oft-times sin with a troubled and disturbed conscience; there is a mighty struggle betwixt their reason and their lusts; but at last they master their consciences, and choose rather to gratify their lusts, than to obey their reason. So did Herod here: for notwithstanding his sorrow, he commands the act; he sent and beheaded John in the prison. Observe, 6. The motives and inducements which prevailed with Herod to behead this holy man. 1. The conscience of his oath: *Nevertheless, for his oath's sake*. See his hypocrisy; he made scruple of a rash oath, who made no scruple of real murder. See here not only the folly, but great impiety of rash vows; especially in ignorant persons, who think themselves obliged by them, whereas it is their duty, first to repent of them, and then to break them as fast as they can. St. Chrysostom says, Herod might have spared the Baptist's head, and yet have kept his oath to Herodias; for he swore to give her only half of his kingdom, and his head was worth more than his whole kingdom. 2. Respect to his reputation, not only for his oath's sake, but *for them that sat with him*. They heard

him promise, and will be witness of his inconstancy if he do not perform. Insisting upon punctilio of honour has hazarded the loss of millions of souls. 3. His great unwillingness to discontent Herodias and her daughter. O vain and foolish hypocrite, who dreaded the displeasing of a wanton mistress more than the offending of God and conscience! Observe, 7. These bloody women do not only require the Baptist to be beheaded, but *that his head be brought in a charger* to them. What a dish was here to be served up at a prince's table on his birth-day! a dead man's head swimming in blood. How prodigiously insatiable is cruelty and revenge! Herodias did not think herself safe till John was dead; she would not think him dead till his head was off, and would not believe his head was off till she had it in her hand. Revenge never thinks it has made sure enough. O how cruel is a wicked heart, that could take pleasure in a spectacle of so much horror! Methinks I see how that holy head was tossed upon Herod's table by impure and filthy hands. That true and faithful tongue, those sacred lips, those chaste eyes, those mortified cheeks, are now insultingly handled by a lewd and incestuous harlot, and made a scorn to Herod's drunken guests. Observe, 8. That neither the holiest of the prophets, nor the best of men, are more secure from violence than from natural death. The holy Baptist, who was sanctified in the womb, conceived and born with so much miracle, lived with so much reverence and observation, is now at midnight obscurely murdered in a close prison. Observe, 9. That it is as true a martyrdom to suffer for duty as for faith. He dies as truly a martyr that dies for doing his duty, as he that dies for professing his faith, and bearing witness to the truth. Observe, 10. How far men may go in religion, and yet be far enough from saving grace: they may reverence God's ministers, believe them to be holy and just men, hear them with delight and pleasure, protect and defend them from their opposers; they may reform, and do many things; and yet be far from the kingdom of God. Herod did all this; he knew John to be a holy and just man, revered and respected him, guarded and kept him safe from Herodias's malice. For though he was imprisoned before, yet Herod suffered none to hurt him, but heard him often with pleasure and delight. Wicked and un-

regenerate men may be so affected with the word of God as to become protectors and defenders of those that dispense it, and yet receive no saving advantage by it. The plain and powerful preaching of the word may win upon and prevail with an unregenerate man to perform many good duties, and to forsake many known sins; and yet may be, after all, remain under the power of hypocrisy. Nay, from Herod's example we may learn, That a wicked man may take some pleasure and delight in hearing the word preached; either the generality of the truths asserted, or the novelty of the notions delivered, or the wit and fancy, the graceful elocution and delivery, of the preacher, may create a present delight; but it is neither a spiritual delight, nor an abiding delight. *And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.* When his disciples heard of it; that is, the disciples of John hearing that their holy master was thus barbarously murdered, they took up his dead body, and decently interred it. Learn hence, That the faithful servants of God are not ashamed of the sufferings of the saints, but will testify their respect unto them, both living, dying, and dead. The disciples of John gave their master an honourable and respectful burial, fearing neither Herod's power nor Herodias's malice.

30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. 31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. 33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran a-foot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. 34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Observe here, 1. How the report of John's death being brought to Christ, he presently withdraws, and his disciples with him, from

that place into the desert. Christ will not long continue his presence in those places where any of his servants are slain, and others of them are in danger. Observe, 2. How our Saviour, upon the notice of John's death, flies into the desert for his own preservation; *his hour was not yet come*, and therefore he keeps out of Herod's way. It is no cowardice to fly from the rage of persecutors. Christ himself both practised it, and directed his disciples to it, saying, *When they persecute you in one city flee to another.* We must not expose our lives to hazard, but when the laying down our lives will do God and religion more service than we can do by living. Observe, 3. With what condolency and sympathizing pity our blessed Saviour exercised acts of mercy and compassion, when the objects of compassion were before him. *Jesus seeing the multitude, was moved with compassion toward them.* Christ, when here on earth, did bear a tender and compassionate heart towards poor creatures in distress and misery: and to our comfort he retains the same compassionate nature and disposition now in heaven which he had here on earth. Observe, 4. The ground or cause of this compassion in our Saviour, because *they were as sheep having no shepherd.* Learn thence, That the case of such people is very sad, and their condition to be much lamented and pitied, who are destitute of able, faithful, and conscientious pastors and teachers, to feed them with the spiritual food of the word and sacraments. Where provision fails, the people perish. But was the Jewish church now without pastors, as sheep without a shepherd? Had they not the Pharisees, the scribes, and doctors, to teach and instruct them? Yes, no doubt; but they were no pastors in Christ's account, because unfaithful pastors. Thence learn, That idle, negligent, and unfaithful pastors, are no pastors in the sight of God, and in the account of Christ: *Jesus had compassion on the multitude, because they were as sheep having no shepherd.*

35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: 36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. 37 He answered and said

unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? 38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. 39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. 41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves; and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. 42 And they did all eat, and were filled. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

This miracle of our Saviour's feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by all the four evangelists, and in the history of it these following particulars are observable. Note, 1. The disciples' pity towards the multitude, who had long fasted and wanted now the ordinary comforts and supports of life. It well becomes the ministers of Christ to respect the bodily necessities, as well as regard the spiritual wants of persons. Observe, 2. The motion which the disciples make to Christ on behalf of the multitude; *Send them away that they may buy victuals.* Here was a strong charity, but a weak faith. A strong charity, in desiring the people's relief; but a weak faith, in supposing that they could not otherwise be relieved but by sending them away; forgetting that Christ, who had healed the multitude miraculously, could also feed them miraculously if he pleased; all things being equally easy to an almighty power. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's strange reply to the disciples' request; They need not depart; *give ye them to eat.* Need not depart! Why, the people must either feed or famish. Victuals they must have, and a dry desert will afford none. Yes, says Christ to his disciples, *Give ye them to eat.* Alas, poor disci-

ples! they had nothing for themselves to eat, how then should they give the multitude to eat? When Christ requires of us what we are unable to perform, it is to show us our impotency and weakness, and to provoke us to look upon him, and depend by faith on his almighty power. Observe, 4. What a poor and slender provision the Lord of the earth has for his household and family; *five barley loaves and two small fishes*. Teaching us, That these bodies of ours must be fed, but not pampered; our belly must not be our master, much less our god. The end of food is to sustain nature, we must not stifle it with a gluttonous variety. And as the quality of the victuals was plain, so the quantity of it was small; five loaves and two fishes. Well might the disciples say, *What are these amongst so many?* The eye of sense and reason sees an utter impossibility of those effects which faith can easily apprehend, and divine power more easily produce. Observe, 5. How Christ, the great Master of the feast, doth marshal his guests: *He commands them all to sit down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties*. None of them reply, "Sit down, but to what? Here are the mouths, but where is the meat? We may soon be set, but when or whence shall we be served?" Not a word like this, but they obey and expect. Lord, how easy it is to trust to thy providence, and rely upon thy power, when there is corn in the barn, bread in the cupboard, or money in the purse: but when our stores are all empty, and we have nothing in hand, then to depend upon an invisible bounty, is a true and noble act of faith. Observe, 6. The actions performed by our blessed Saviour: *He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and they to the multitude*. 1. *He blessed* them, teaching us by his example, never to use or receive the good creatures of God for our nourishment without prayer and praise; never to sit down to our food as a beast to his forage. 2. *He brake* the loaves. He could have multiplied them whole, why then would he rather do it in the breaking? Perhaps to teach us, that we may rather expect his blessing in the distribution of his bounty, than in the reservation of it. Scattering is the way to increasing: liberality is the way to riches. 3. Christ *gave* the bread thus broken to his disciples, that they might distribute it to the multitude. But why did our Lord distribute the loaves by his disciples' hands? Doubtless to gain

respect to his disciples from the people. And the same course doth our Lord take in spiritual distributions. He that could feed the world by his own immediate hand, chooses rather by the hand of his ministers to divide the bread of life among his people. Observe, 7. The certainty and the greatness of the miracle: *They did all eat, and were filled*. They did all eat, not a crumb or a bit, but to satiety and fulness. All that were hungry did eat, and all that did eat were satisfied, and yet *twelve baskets full of fragments remain*. More is left than was at first set on. It is hard to say which was the greatest miracle, the miraculous eating, or the miraculous leaving. If we consider what they eat, we may wonder that they left any thing: if what they left, that they ate any thing. Observe, 8. These fragments, though of barley loaves and fish-bones, must not be lost, but, at our Saviour's command, gathered up. The liberal Housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his orna. O how tremendous will their account be, who having large and plentiful estates, spend them upon their lusts, being worse than lost in God's account.

45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. 46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. 47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. 48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary to them; and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. 49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. 51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. 52 For they considered

not *the miracle* of the loaves : for their heart was hardened.

This paragraph acquaints us with another miracle which our Saviour wrought, *in walking upon the sea to his disciples*; and herein we have observable, 1. His sending his disciples to sea : *He constrained them to go into a ship*; not compelling them against their wills, but commanding them to take ship and go before him. No doubt the disciples were loath to do this, unwilling to leave him, and to go without him; for they that have once tasted the sweetness of Christ's company and acquaintance, are hardly and difficultly drawn away from him. Observe, 2. Christ having dismissed his disciples and the company, retires *into a mountain to pray*: to teach us, that when we address ourselves to God in duty, we take all helps, furtherances, and advantages, for the doing of our duty. We must dismiss the multitude, before we address to God in prayer; we must send away the multitude of worldly cares, worldly thoughts, worldly concerns and business, when we would wait upon God in duty. Observe, 3. The great danger the disciples were in, and the difficulties they were to encounter with : *They were in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves, and the winds were contrary*; and, which was saddest of all, Christ was absent. The wisdom of God sometimes suffers his children and people not only to be distressed, but greatly distressed with a variety of distresses. Observe, 4. The seasonable succour and relief which Christ afforded his disciples : *In the fourth watch he came out unto them, walking upon the waters*. It was not a stormy and tempestuous sea that could separate betwixt him and them; he that waded through a sea of blood, and a sea of wrath, to save his people, will walk upon a sea of waters to succour and relieve them. And the time was the fourth watch; about four in the morning, when they had been many hours conflicting with the waves, and in great danger of their lives. To teach us, That Christ sometimes lengthens out the trials of his children before he delivers them; but when they come to an extremity, that is the season of his succour. Observe, 5. How the disciples took their Deliverer for their destroyer : *When they saw Christ they cried out*. Their fears were highest when their Deliverer and deliverance were nearest; God may be coming with salvation and deliverance to his people, when they for

the present cannot discern it. Observe, 6. When the disciples were in the saddest condition, one word from Christ revives them, it is sufficient support in all our afflictions to hear Christ's voice speaking to us, and to enjoy his favourable presence with us. Say but, O Saviour, *It is I*, and let evils do their worst : that one word, *It is I*, is sufficient to allay all storms, and to calm a thousand tempests. Observe lastly, What influence and effect this miracle had upon the disciples; *They were sore amazed and beyond measure astonished*; they wonder at the ceasing of the winds, and calming of the seas; *but they had forgotten the miracle of the loaves*: which was a great stupidity and dulness in them, and argued hardness of heart, and want of consideration in them. Learn thence, That there is much stupidity of mind, and hardness of heart, remaining unmortified in the best of saints, whilst here in an imperfect state: the work of grace and sanctification is but imperfect in the best.

53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. 54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, 55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. 56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

Here observe, 1. The unwearied diligence and industry of our Saviour in going about to do good: he no sooner landeth, but he goeth to Gennesaret, and healeth their sick. It was the great business and constant employment of our Saviour's life to travel from place to place, that he might be useful and beneficial to mankind: he went to those that could not, and to those that would not, come to him. Observe, 2. The people of Gennesaret's charity to their sick neighbours; they sent abroad to let all the country know, that Christ the great Physician was come amongst them. There is a duty of love and mercy which we owe unto those that are in affliction and misery; namely, to afford



them the best help, relief, and succour, we are able, both in their inward and outward afflictions. Observe, 3. The suddenness and certainty of the cure; they touched him, and were made whole. The healing virtue lay not in their fingers, but in their faith; or rather in Christ, whom their faith apprehended.

#### CHAP. VII.

**T**HEN came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault. 3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 And *when they come* from the market, except they wash they eat not, And many other things there be which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and pots, brassen vessels, and of tables. 5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? 6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free.*

12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; 13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with the conference or disputation which our Saviour had with the Pharisees about their superstitious observations with the Jewish traditions. These traditions were such rites and customs as were delivered to them by the elders and rulers of the Jewish church in former times: which traditions they valued and regarded more than the express commandments of God. Learn thence, That superstitious men are always more fond of and zealous for the traditions of men in divine worship, than for the express and positive commands of God. Secondly, That it is the manner of such persons to tie others to their own practice and example in matters of religious worship, and to censure and condemn all those who do not conform to them in the smallest matters. The Pharisees here censure the disciples for eating with unwashen hands, because it was their custom to wash when they did eat; yet did not Christ or his disciples refuse to wash before meat, as it was a civil and decent custom, but because the Pharisees made it a religious rite: teaching us, That what is in itself indifferent, and may without offence be done as a civil custom, ought to be discountenanced and opposed when required of us as an act of religion. The Jews, fearing lest they should touch any person or thing that was unclean, and so be defiled unawares, did use frequent washings, as of cups, pots, vessels, tables, beds, or couches, which they lay upon when they eat. Thus Pharisaical hypocrisy puts God off with outward cleansing, instead of inward purity; regarding more the outward cleanness of the hand, than the inward purity of the heart. This was the accusation of the Pharisees, to which our Saviour replies by way of recrimination, that if his disciples did not observe the tradition of the elders, they (the Pharisees) *did reject and make void the commandments of God, and did worship him in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Learn hence, That all service and worship which is offered to God, according to man's will and ordinances, and not according to the rule of God's own word, is vain and unprofitable: divine institution is the only

pure rule of religious worship, as to the substance of it ; here, what God doth not command, he forbids. Observe next, The instance which our Saviour produces of the Pharisees' violating an express command of God, and preferring their own traditions before it : he instances in the fifth commandment, which requires children to relieve their parents in their necessities. Now though the Pharisees did not deny this in plain terms, yet they made an exception from it, which, if children pleased, might render it vain, void, and useless. For the Pharisees taught, That in case the child of a poor parent, that wanted relief, would give a gift to the temple, which gift they called *Corban*, that is, a gift consecrated to God and religious uses, that then the children of such poor persons were discharged from making any further provision for their aged and impotent parents ; but might reply after this manner, " That which thou askest for thy supply is given to God, and " therefore I cannot relieve thee." So that covetous and graceless children looked upon it as the most frugal way, once for all, to fine to the temple, rather than pay the constant rent of daily relief to their poor parents. Learn hence, that the practice of moral duties is required before, and is more acceptable to Almighty God than the most solemn acts and exercises of instituted worship whatsoever. *I will have mercy, says God, rather than sacrifice ; and to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than burnt-offering.* Secondly, That no duty, gift, or offering to God, is accepted where the duty of charity is neglected : it is much more acceptable to God to refresh the bowels of his saints, who are the living temples of the Holy Ghost, than to adorn material temples with gold and silver. *Corban* is a Syriac word, signifying a gift given unto God. The Pharisees applied these gifts to the use and service of the temple ; possibly to repair, beautify, and adorn it ; which had not been amiss, if they had not taught that such gifts to the temple did discharge children from the duty of charity to their natural parents : *These things they ought to have done, in the first place, and not to leave the other undone.*

14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Harken unto me every one of you, and understand. 15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him, can defile him : but

the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. 18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also ? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him ; 19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats ? 20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness : 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Our blessed Saviour, leaving the Pharisees with some dislike, applies himself to the multitude, and instructs them in a very necessary and useful doctrine, touching the true original cause of all spiritual pollution and uncleanness ; namely, the filthiness and impurity of man's heart and nature. And that it is not the meat eaten with the mouth, but the wickedness of the heart, vented by the mouth, which pollutes a person in God's account. The heart and soul of man alone is capable of sinful defilement. Nothing can defile a person in God's account, but that which defileth the inward man. Learn hence, 1. That the heart of man is the sink and seed-plot of all sin, the source and fountain of all pollution. 2. That all the impurity of the life proceeds from the impurity and filthiness of the heart. Men's lives would not be so bad, if their hearts were not worse. The disciples desiring the interpretation of the foregoing parable, our Saviour gives it them ; but withal expostulates with them for not understanding a matter so obvious and plain : *Are ye yet without understanding ?* As if he had said, " Have you sat thus long under my ministerial teaching, and enjoyed the benefit of my conversation, and yet are no farther proficient in knowledge ?" Plainly

intimating, that Christ expects a proficiency in knowledge from us proportionable to the opportunities and means of knowledge enjoyed by us. Having given them this rebuke, he next acquaints them with the sense and meaning of the parable; namely, that it is out of a wicked and sinful heart that all sin and wickedness doth proceed. Though the occasions of sin are from without, yet the source and original of it is from within. The heart of man is as a cage full of unclean birds; hence proceed *evil thoughts*, either against God or our neighbours. *Adulteries*, or all the sins of the flesh. *Murders*; that is, all cruelty and hard dealing towards others. *An evil eye*: that is, an envious spirit, which frets and grieves at the happiness of others; called an evil eye, because envy doth much show and manifest itself in the outward countenance, and especially by the eyes. From the whole note, That the best way to hinder the progress of sin in the life, is to mortify it in the heart, to crucify all inordinate motions, lusts, and corruptions, in their root; for the heart is the first seat and subject of sin, from whence it flows forth into the life and conversation.

24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. 25 For a *certain* woman, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet. 26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation: and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. 27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. 28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. 29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

All along, in the history of our Saviour's life, we are to take notice how he went

about from place to place doing good. Being now come into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, he finds a poor woman of the race of the Canaanites, who becomes first an humble suppliant, and then a bold beggar, on the behalf of her possessed daughter. Where observe, 1. That though all Israel could not example the faith of this Canaanite, yet was her daughter tormented with a devil. Learn thence, That neither truth of faith, nor strength of faith, can secure against Satan's inward temptations, or outward vexations; and, consequently, the worst of bodily afflictions are no sufficient proof of divine displeasure. Observe, 2. The daughter did not come to Christ for herself, but the mother for her. Perhaps the child was not so sensible of its own misery, but the mother feels both the child's sorrow and her own. True goodness teaches us to appropriate the afflictions of others to ourselves, causing us to bear their griefs, and to sympathize with them in their sorrows. Observe, 3. The seeming severity of Christ to this poor woman: he calls her not a woman, but a *dog*; and, as it were, spurns her from the table. Did ever so severe a word drop from those mild lips? What shall we say? Is the Lamb of God turned a lion, that a woman in distress, imploring pity, should be thus rated out of Christ's presence? But hence we learn, How Christ puts the strongest faith of his own children upon the severest trial. This trial had never been so sharp, if her faith had not been so strong; usually where God gives much grace, he tries grace much. Observe, 4. The humble carriage of this holy woman: her humility grants all, her patience overcomes all, she meekly desires to possess the dogs' place; not to crowd to the table, but to creep under it, and to partake of the crumbs of mercy that fall from thence. Nothing is so pleasing to Christ as to see his people follow him with faith and importunity when he seems to withdraw himself from them.

31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. 32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. 33 And he took him aside from the

multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue ; 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. 35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. 36 And he charged them that they should tell no man : but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it ; 37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well : he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

See here, 1. The bitter fruits and sad effects of sin, which has brought deafness, dumbness, and blindness, upon the human nature. As death, so all diseases, entered into the world by sin ; sin first brought infirmities and mortality into our natures, and the wages of sin are diseases and death. Observe, 2. That the blessing of bodily health and healing is from Christ ; who by his divine power, as he was God, miraculously and immediately healed them that were brought unto him. Observe, 3. The actions and gestures which our Saviour used in healing this deaf person. He puts his fingers into his ears, he spit, and touched his tongue. Not that these were means or natural causes effecting the cure, for there was no healing virtue in the spittle ; but only outward signs, testimonies, and pledges, of Christ's divine power and gracious readiness to cure the person in distress. Observe, 4. How Christ withdrew the person from the multitude, whom he was about to help and heal. Teaching us, in all our good works, to avoid all show and appearance of ostentation and vain-glory ; to set God's glory before our eyes, and not seek our own praise. Observe, 5. The effect which this miracle had upon the multitude : it occasioned their astonishment and applause. *They were astonished, and said, He hath done all things well.* It becomes us both to take notice of the wonderful works of God, and also to magnify and extol the author of them. This is one way of glorifying our Creator.

#### CHAP. VIII.

**I**N those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to

eat, Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and saith unto them, 2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat : 3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way : for divers of them came from far. 4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these *men* with bread here in the wilderness ? 5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye ? And they said, Seven. 6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground : and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before *them* ; and they did set *them* before the people. 7 And they had a few small fishes : and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before *them*. 8 So they did eat, and were filled : and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets. 9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand : and he sent them away.

This chapter begins with the relation of a famous miracle wrought by our Saviour ; namely, his feeding of four thousand persons with seven loaves and a few fishes. And here we have observable, First, The tender care which Christ took of the bodies of men, to provide all necessaries for their support and comfort ; *He giveth us richly all things to enjoy.* The great House-keeper of the world *openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.* How careful was our Saviour here, that the bodies of poor creatures might not faint, nor be over weak and weary by the way ! Therefore he would not dismiss them without refreshment. Observe, 2. The original source and spring from whence this care that Christ had of the multitude did proceed and flow ; namely, from that sympathizing pity and tender compassion which the merciful heart of Christ did bear towards persons in distress and misery. Learn hence, That the tender pity and compassion of Christ is not the spring and fountain of spiritual mercies only, but of temporal blessings also ; *I have compassion on the multitude, who*

*have nothing to eat.* Observe, 3. How the disciples, not seeing any outward visible means for the people's support, conclude it impossible for so many to be satisfied with the little supply they had; namely, seven loaves and a few small fishes. Learn thence, That a weak faith soon grows thoughtful, and sometimes distrustful, at the sight of difficulties. *Whence, say the disciples, can these men be satisfied with bread?* Not considering that the power of God in blessing our food, is far above the means of food. It is as easy for him to sustain and nourish us with a little as with much; *Man liveth not by bread,* but by the blessing of God upon the bread he eats. Observe, 4. That although Christ could have fed these four thousand without the loaves, yet he takes and makes use of them, seeing they might be had. Learn hence, That Christ did not neglect his own appointed ordinary means, nor do any thing in an extraordinary way, farther than was absolutely necessary. Christ was above means, and could work without them; and when they failed, did so: but when the means were at hand, he made use of them himself, to teach us never to expect that in a way of miracle which may be come at in a way of means. Observe, 5. From our Lord's example, that religious custom of begging a blessing upon our food before we sit down to it, and of *receiving the good creatures of God with thanksgiving.* How unworthy is he of the crumbs that fall from his own table, who, with the swine, looks not up unto, and takes no thankful notice of, the hand that feeds him! Observe, 6. The certainty and greatness of the miracle: *They did all eat, and were filled.* They did all eat, not a crust of bread, or a bit of fish, but to satiety and fulness. All that were hungry did eat, and all that did eat were satisfied, and yet *seven baskets remain:* more is left than was at first set on. It is hard to say which was the greatest miracle, the miraculous eating or miraculous leaving. If we consider what they eat, we may wonder that they left any thing; if what they left, that they ate any thing. Observe, lastly, Our Lord's command to gather up the fragments, teaches us, That we make no waste of the good creatures of God. The fragments of fish-bones and broken bread must be gathered up: the liberal Housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his orts. Frugality is a commendable duty. God hath made

us stewards, but not absolute lords of his blessings. We must be accountable to him for all the instances of his bounty received from him.

10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. 11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. 12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. 13 And he left them, and, entering into the ship again, departed to the other side.

Observe here, 1. The unreasonable practice of the wicked Pharisees in asking a sign of Christ; that is, some new and extraordinary miracle to be wrought by him, to demonstrate him to be the true and promised Messiah. But had not our Saviour showed them signs enow already? What were all the miracles daily wrought before their eyes, but convincing signs of his divine power? But infidelity, mixed with obstinacy, is never satisfied. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's carriage towards these obstinate Pharisees, who persisted in their unbelief: *he sighed deeply in his spirit,* and mourned for the hardness of their hearts. Learn hence, That to grieve and mourn for the sins of others, to be affected with them, and deeply afflicted for them, is a gracious and Christ-like temper. It is not sufficient to make an outward show of grieving for others' sins, but we ought to lay them to heart, and to be inwardly afflicted for them: *Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit.* Observe, 3. A sharp reproof given by our Saviour to them. At the same time that our Saviour did inwardly grieve for the Pharisees' wickedness, he did openly reprove them for it. It is not sufficient that we mourn for the sins of others, but we must prudently reprove them, as occasion is offered, and our duty requireth. Observe, 4. The sin which the Pharisees are reprov'd for; namely, *for seeking after a sign:* that is, for demanding new miracles, after he had wrought so many before their eyes, to prove the divinity of his person. Learn thence, That it is a sin for any to require new signs and miracles for the confirmation of that doctrine which has been already

sufficiently confirmed by miracles ; yea, an heinous sin, which deserveth a sharp reproof and censure. Observe lastly, Our Saviour's peremptory denial of the Pharisees' presumptuous request : *There shall be no sign given to this generation ;* that is, no such sign or miracle as they desire, or would have : no sign or miracle shall be wrought at their motion and suit. Although after this, Christ of his own accord, and at his own pleasure, wrought many miracles before their eyes. Such as wilfully harden themselves against the light of their own consciences, are righteously delivered up to hardness of heart, and final impenitency. These hypocritical Pharisees shut their eyes against the most convictive evidence ; and they are given up to their own obstinacy : our Saviour left them, and departed.

14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. 15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. 16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is because we have no bread.* 17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye because ye have no bread ? perceive ye not yet, neither understand ? have ye your heart yet hardened ? 18 Having eyes, see ye not ? and having ears, hear ye not ? and do ye not remember ? 19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up ? They say unto him, Twelve. 20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up ? And they said, Seven. 21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand ?

Observe here, 1. How dull the disciples of Christ were under Christ's own teaching, and how apt to put a carnal sense upon his words. They apprehended he had spoken unto them of the leaven of bread, what he intended of the leaven of the Pharisees' doctrine. Observe, 2. The rebuke our Saviour gives his disciples for not understanding the sense and

signification of what he spake. Christ is much offended with his own people, when he discerns blindness and ignorance in them, after more than ordinary means of knowledge enjoyed by them : *How is it that ye do not yet understand ?* Observe, 3. The metaphor by which Christ sets forth the corrupt doctrines of the Pharisees and Herodians. He compares it to leaven. Partly for its sourness, and partly for its diffusiveness. Now the leaven of Herod, or the Herodians, is supposed to be this : that because Herod was made king of the Jews, and lived at the time when the Messiah was expected, there were those that maintained the opinion that he was the promised Messiah ; which opinion Christ compares to leaven, because as that diffuses itself into the whole mass or lump of bread with which it is mixed, so false doctrine, was not only evil and corrupt in itself, but apt to spread its contagion farther and farther, to the infecting of others with it. Learn thence, That error is as damnable as vice ; and persons erroneous in judgment to be avoided, as well as those that are wicked in conversation ; and be that has a due care of his soul's salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as he is of debauched practices. Observe, 4. Our Saviour does not command his disciples to separate from communion with the Pharisees, and oblige them not to hear their doctrine ; but only to beware of their errors, which they mixed with their doctrine. We may and ought to hold communion with a church, though erroneous in judgment, if not fundamentally erroneous. For separation from a church is not justifiable upon any other grounds than that which makes a separation between God and that church, which is either apostasy into gross idolatry, or, in point of doctrine, into damnable heresy. Observe, 5. The fault observed by our Saviour in his disciples, hardness of heart : *Have ye your hearts yet hardened ?* There may be, and oft-times is, some degree of hardness of heart in sincere christians ; but this is not a total hardness ; it is lamented, and humbled for, not indulged and delighted in. As Christ is grieved for the hardness of his people's hearts, so are they grieved also ; it is both bitter and burdensome to them.

22 And he cometh to Bethsaida ; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town: and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought? 24 And he looked up, and said, I see men, as trees, walking. 25 After that he put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. 26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

Here we have recorded a special miracle wrought by our Saviour at Bethsaida, in curing a blind man brought unto him. Where observe, 1. What evident proof the Pharisees had of Christ's divine power and Godhead: he had before caused the *deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk*; now he makes the blind to see: yet did the Pharisees obstinately resist all means of their conviction, and continued in their opposition to truth, to their inevitable and unutterable condemnation. Observe, 2. The wonderful humility, the great condescension, of Jesus Christ towards this blind man; *He took him by the hand; and led him, himself*. A great evidence of his condescending humility, and of his goodness and mercy: showing how ready and willing he was to help and heal him. See here a singular pattern of humility and condescending grace and mercy in our dear Redeemer, in that he vouchsafed with his own hands to take and lead a poor blind man through the streets of Bethsaida, in the sight of all the people. Let us learn of him, *who was thus meek and lowly in heart*. Observe, 3. Our Lord helps the blind man out of the town before he heals him; not in the town, where all the people might take notice of it. Thereby teaching us to avoid all show of ambition, all appearance of vain-glory, in what we do. *Even as Christ sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him*. Observe, 4. The manner of the cure wrought upon this blind man: it was gradual, and by degrees; not instantaneous, and at once: he had first a dark, dim, and obscure sight, afterwards a clear and perfect sight. Christ thereby gave evidence of his absolute and omnipotent power, that he was not tied to any particular means, or manner, or order, of

working; but wrought his miracles variously, as he saw to be most fit for the glory of God, and the benefit of his people. Observe, lastly, The charge given by our Saviour not to publish this miracle in the town of Bethsaida; a place where Christ had so often preached, and wrought so many miracles; but the inhabitants had obstinately and contemptuously undervalued and despised both his doctrine and miracles: therefore we read, *Matt. xi. 21.* that our Saviour denounced a woe against Bethsaida, assuring her, that it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for her. The higher a people rise under the means, the lower they fall if they miscarry. Such a people as have been nearest to conversion, being not converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged.

27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. 29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. 30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. 31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed; and after three days rise again. 32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

These verses relate to us a conference which our Saviour had with his disciples touching their own and others' opinion of his person. Where observe, 1. The place where Christ and his disciples did confer: it was *in the way as they walked together*.

Teaching us our duty to take all occasions and opportunities for holy conference, for good discourse touching spiritual things, when in the house, when in the field, when travelling in the way, Mal. iii. 16. *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.* Observe, 2. The conference itself: *Whom do men say that I am?* That is, what do the common people think and speak of me? Not as if Christ were ignorant what men said of him, or did vain-gloriously enquire after the opinion of the multitude concerning him; but with an intention more firmly to settle and establish his disciples in the belief of his being the true and promised Messiah. The disciples tell him, that *some said he was John the Baptist, others Elias, others one of the prophets.* It is no new thing, it seems, to find diversity of judgments and opinions concerning Christ, and the affairs of his kingdom. When our Saviour was amongst men, who daily conversed with him, yet was there then a great diversity of opinions concerning him. Observe, 3. How St. Peter, as the mouth of all the apostles, and in their names, makes a full and open confession of Christ, acknowledging him to be the true and promised Messiah: *Peter said, Thou art the Christ.* Whence note, That the veil of Christ's human nature did not keep the eye of his disciples' faith from seeing him to be truly and really God. 2. That Jesus, the Son of the Virgin Mary, was the Christ, the true Messiah, or the person ordained by God to be the Mediator betwixt God and man; the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind: *Thou art the Christ.* Observe, 4. The charge and special injunction given by our Saviour to tell no man of him: that is, not commonly and openly to declare that he was the Son of God and the true Messiah: because he was now in his state of humiliation, and the glory of his divinity was to be concealed till his resurrection. Christ had his own fit times and proper seasons, in which he revealed the great mysteries of his kingdom to the world. Observe, 5. The great wisdom of our Saviour in acquainting his disciples with the near approach of his death and passion; thereby to prevent that scandal and offence which otherwise they might have taken at his sufferings; the better to fit and prepare them to bear that great trial; and to correct the error which they had entertained touching an earthly kingdom of Christ, that the Messiah was to be

a temporal prince. Observe, 6. St. Peter's carriage towards Christ upon this occasion: *He took him aside,* and began to blame him for affirming that he must die. O how ready is flesh and blood to oppose all that tends to suffering! What need have we to be fortified against the temptations of our friends, as well as of our enemies! Satan sometimes makes use of good men as his instruments to do his work by, when they little suspect it. Little did Peter think that Satan now set him on work to hinder the redemption of mankind, by dissuading Christ from dying. Observe, 7. With what indignation Christ rejects Peter's admonition: *Get thee behind me, Satan.* Christ heard Satan speaking in Peter: it was Peter's tongue, but Satan tuned it; therefore Christ calls Peter by Satan's name. They that will do the devil's work, shall have the devil's name too. He that would hinder the redemption of mankind is Satan, an adversary to mankind. From our Saviour's smart reproof given to Peter, we learn, That no respect to men's persons, or regard to their piety, must cause us to flatter them in their sins, or move us to speak favourably of their sins. As well as our Saviour loved Peter, he rebukes him severely. O Lord! so intent was thy heart upon the great work of our redemption, that thou couldst not bear the least word that should obstruct thee in it, or divert thee from it.

34 And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Observe here, 1. How our blessed Saviour recommends his religion to every one's election and choice, not attempting by force and violence to compel any person to the embracing of it: *If any man will come after me;* that is, if any man chooses and resolves to be a christian. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's terms propounded; namely, self-denial, gospel-suffering, and gospel-service. 1. Self-denial: *Let him deny himself.* By which we are not to understand, either the denying of our senses in matters of faith, or the renouncing our reason in the matters of religion; but a willingness



to part with all our earthly comforts and temporal enjoyments, for the sake of Christ, when called thereunto. 2. Gospel-suffering: *He must take up his cross.* An allusion to the Roman custom, that the malefactor who was to be crucified took his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution. Where note, That not the making of the cross, but the patient bearing of it, when God has made it, and laid it upon our shoulders, is the duty enjoined: *Let him take up his cross.* 3. Gospel-service: *Let him follow me,* says Christ; that is, obey my commands, and imitate my example. He must set my life and doctrine continually before him, and be daily correcting and reforming of his life by that rule and pattern. Observe, 3. The reasons urged by our Saviour to induce men to a willingness to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ and his holy religion: *He that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that is willing to lose his life for the gospel's sake, the same shall find it.* Intimating to us, 1. That the love of this temporal life is a great temptation to men to deny Christ, and to renounce his holy religion. And, That the surest way to attain eternal life, is cheerfully to lay down our temporal life, when the glory of Christ, and the honour of religion, requires it at our hand.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Our Saviour had shown in the former verses the great danger of seeking to save our temporal life, by exposing to hazard our eternal life. This he confirms in the words before us by a double argument: the first drawn from the excellency of eternal life, or the life of the soul; the second drawn from the irrecoverableness of this loss, or the impossibility of redeeming the loss of the soul by any way or means whatsoever: *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Learn, 1. That Almighty God has intrusted every one of us with a soul of inestimable worth and preciousness, capable of being saved or lost, and that to all eternity. 2. That the gain of the whole world is not comparable with the loss of one precious soul: the soul's loss is an inconceivable, irrecompensable, and irrecoverable loss.

38 Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

That is, whosoever shall deny or disown me, either in my person, my gospel, or my members, for any fear or favour of man, he shall with shame be disowned, and eternally rejected, by me at the great day. There are two passions that make persons disown Christ and religion in the day of temptation; namely, fear and shame. Many good men have been overcome by the former, as St. Peter and others; but we find not any good man in scripture guilty of the latter; namely, that denied Christ out of shame. This argues a rotten, unsound, and corrupt heart. If any man thinks it beneath his honour and quality to own the opposed truths and despised members of Jesus Christ, he will think it much more beneath him, his honour and dignity, to own them at the great day. Learn hence, That it is not sufficient that we own Christ by believing in him, we must honour him by an outward professing of him also. Secondly, That such as are ashamed of Christ's doctrine or members, are ashamed of Christ himself. Thirdly, That such as either for fear dare not, or for shame will not, own the doctrine of Christ, or the members of Christ now, shall find Christ ashamed to own and confess them at the great day. *Whosoever is ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and wicked generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels.*

#### CHAP. IX.

AND he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

There is a threefold sense and interpretation given of these words by expositors: 1. Some refer the words to the times of the gospel after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when the gospel was preached and propagated far and near, and *the kingdom of God came with power.* Learn hence,

That where the gospel is powerfully preached, and cheerfully obeyed, there Christ cometh most gloriously in his kingdom. 2 Others understand these words of Christ's coming, and exercising his kingly power in the destruction of Jerusalem; which some of the apostles then standing by lived to see. 3. Others (as most agreeable to the context) understand the words as relating to our Saviour's transfiguration. As if he had said, *Some of you*, meaning Peter, James, and John, shall shortly see me upon Mount Tabor, in such splendour and glory, as shall be a *prælium*, a shadow and representation, of that glory, which I shall appear in, when I come to judge the world at the great day. And whereas our Saviour says not, There be some standing here which shall not die, but, *which shall not taste of death*, this implies two things:

1. That after they had seen his transfiguration, they must taste of death as well as others. 2. That they should but taste of it, and no more. From whence learn, 1. That the faithful servants and disciples of Christ must at length, in God's appointed time, taste and have experience of death as well as others. 2. That although they must taste, yet they shall but taste of death; they shall not drink of the dregs of that bitter cup: though they fall by the hand of death, yet shall they not be overcome by it; but in the very fall get victory over it.

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

Here we have the history of our Saviour's transfiguration, when he laid, as it were, the garments of our frail humanity aside for a little time, assuming to himself the robes of majesty and glory, to demonstrate and testify the truth of his divinity; for this divine glory was an evidence of his divine nature; and also an emblem of that glory which he and his disciples, all his faithful servants and followers, shall enjoy together in heaven.

3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 3 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses; and they were

talking with Jesus. 5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. 7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him. 8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Observe here, That to confirm the disciples' faith in the truth of Christ's divine nature, he was pleased to suffer the rays of his divinity to dart forth before their eyes, so far as they were able to bear it. His face shined with a pleasing brightness, and his raiment with such a glorious lustre, as did at once both delight and dazzle the eyes of the disciples. Observe, 2. The choice which our Saviour makes of the witnesses of his glorious transfiguration; his three disciples, Peter, James, and John. But why disciples? why three disciples? why these three? 1. Why disciples? Because this transfiguration was a type and shadow of his glory in heaven: Christ vouchsafes therefore the earnest and first-fruits of that glory only to saints, upon whom he intended to bestow the full harvest in due time. 2. Why three disciples? Because three were sufficient to witness the truth and reality of this miracle. Judas was unworthy of this favour; yet, lest he should murmur or be discontented, others are left out as well as he. But, 3. Why these three, rather than others? Probably, 1. Because these three were more eminent for grace, zeal, and love, towards Christ. Now the most eminent manifestations of glory are made to those that are most excelling in grace. 2. These three disciples were witnesses of Christ's agony and passion; to prepare them for which, they are here made witnesses of his transfiguration. This glorious vision upon mount Tabor fitted them to abide the terror of Mount Calvary. Observe, 3. The glorious attendants upon our Saviour at his transfiguration. They were *two, two men*, and those two men *Moses and Elias*. This being but a glimpse of Christ's glory, not a full mani-

festation of, only two of the glorified saints attend at it. These two attendants are not two angels, but two men; because men were more nearly concerned than angels in what was done. But why Moses and Elias rather than other men? 1. Because Moses was the giver of the law, and Elias was the chief of the prophets. Now both these attending upon Christ, did show the consent of the law and the prophets with Christ, and their accomplishment and fulfilling in him. 2. Because these two were the most laborious servants of Christ; both adventured their lives in God's cause, and therefore are highly honoured by him. *For, those that honour him, he will honour.* Observe, 4. The carriage and demeanor of the disciples upon this great occasion: 1. They supplicate Jesus, not Moses and Elias; they make no suit to them, but to Christ only: *Master, it is good being here.* O what a ravishing comfort and satisfaction is the communion and fellowship of the saints! But the presence of Christ amongst them renders their joys transporting. 2. They proffer their service to farther the continuance of what they did enjoy: *Let us make three tabernacles.* Saints will stick at no pains or cost for the enjoyment of Christ's presence, and his people's company. Learn hence, That a glimpse of heaven's glory is sufficient to wrap a soul into ecstasy, and to make it out of love with worldly company. 2. That we are too apt to desire more of heaven upon earth than God will allow. We would have the heavenly glory come down to us, but are unwilling by death to go up to that. Observe, 5. How a cloud was put before the disciples' eyes when the divine glory was manifested to them; partly to allay the lustre and resplendency of that glory which they were swallowed up with. The glory of heaven is insupportable in this sinful state; we cannot bear it unveiled: and partly to hinder their farther prying and looking into that glory. We must be content to behold God through a cloud *darkly here, ere long we shall see him face to face.* Observe, 6. The testimony given out of the cloud, by God the Father, concerning Jesus Christ his Son: *This is my beloved Son; hear him.* Where note, 1. The dignity of his person; he is *my Son*; for nature coessential, and for duration coeternal, with his Father. 2. The endearedness of his relation: he is *my beloved Son*: because of his conformity

to me, and compliance with me. Likeness is the cause of love; and an union and harmony of wills causes a mutual endearing of affections. 2. The authority of his doctrine; *Hear ye him*: not Moses and Elias, who were servants; but Christ, my Son, whom I have commissioned to be the great Prophet and Teacher of my church. Therefore adore him as my Son, believe in him as your Saviour and hear him as your Lawgiver. The obedient ear honours Christ more than either the gazing eye, the adoring knee, or the applauding tongue.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. 11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? 12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things: and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. 13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Observe here, 1. The strict injunction given by Christ to his disciples, not to publish or proclaim this glorious vision at his transfiguration till after his resurrection; because, being now in a state of humiliation, he would have his divine majesty and glory veiled and concealed. Learn hence, That the divine glory of Christ's person, as God, was not to be manifested suddenly, and all at once, but gradually, and by steps. First more obscurely, by his miracles, by the forced acknowledgment of devils, by the free confession of his disciples, and by the glorious vision of his transfiguration; but the more clear and full, the more public and open, manifestation of his divine glory, was at the time of his resurrection and ascension. Observe, 2. The disciples' obedience to Christ's injunction, touching the concealing of his transfiguration till after his resurrection: *They kept that saying with themselves, questioning*

*one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* Not that they questioned the resurrection in general, but Christ's resurrection only in particular, because his resurrection did suppose his death; and they could not conceive how the Messiah, whom they erroneously supposed must be a temporal prince, should suffer death at the hands of men. Observe, 3. The question which the disciples put to Christ, how the observation of the Jewish doctors holds good; namely, that *Elias must come before the Messiah came: we see the Messias, but no Elias.* Our Saviour answers, *That Elias was come already; not Elias in person, but one in the spirit and power of Elias, to wit, John the Baptist, who was prophesied of under the name of Elias of the Old Testament, and of the New, viz. John the Baptist; they were both men of great zeal for God and religion, they were both undaunted reprovers of the faults of princes, and they were both implacably hated and persecuted for the same.* Thence learn, *That hatred and persecution, even unto death, has often been the lot and portion of such persons who have had the courage and zeal to reprove the faults of princes: Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed.*

14 And when he came to *his* disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to *him*, saluted him. 16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? 17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit: 18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. 19 He answereth him and saith, O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me. 20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare

him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. 21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child: 22 And oft-times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, *Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.* 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. 28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.

Observe here, 1. The person brought to Christ for help and healing: one bodily possessed by Satan, who had made him deaf and dumb from his childhood; and oft-times cast him into the fire and water, but rather to torment than to despatch him. O how does Satan, that malicious tyrant, rejoice in doing hurt to the bodies, as well as the souls, of mankind! Lord, abate his power, since his malice will not be abated. How great is thy goodness, in preserving us from the power and malice of evil spirits, and how watchful is thy providence over us, to preserve us, when Satan is seeking, by all imaginable means and methods, to destroy us. Observe, 2. The person that represents his sad condition to our Saviour: his compassionate father, *who kneeled down and cried out.* Need will make a person both humble and eloquent. Every one has a tongue to speak for himself; happy is he that keeps a tongue for others. Ob-

serve, 3. The circumstance of time : Satan had got possession of his person very young, in his youth ; nay, in his childhood : and O how hard was it to cast him out after so long possession ! The disciples could not do it with all their power and prayers : and when our Saviour himself, by the power of his Godhead, did dispossess him, it was with foaming and rending that he left him. Thus when Satan gets possession of persons' hearts in their youth, O how hard will it be to cast him out ! It will put the soul to great grief, great pain, great sorrow of heart. Satan will endeavour to hold his own, and keep the sinner his slave and vassal, if all the power of hell can keep him. Lord, convince young persons, that it is easier to keep Satan out, than it is to cast him out of the possession of their hearts. Observe, 4. The physicians which this distressed person is brought unto. First to the disciples, and then to Jesus. We never apply ourselves importunately to the God of power, till we despair of the creatures' help. But why could not the disciples cast him out ? Christ tells them, because of their unbelief ; that is, because of the weakness of their faith, not the total want of faith. Whence learn, That secret unbelief may lie hid and undiscerned in the heart, which neither others nor ourselves may take notice of, until some trial doth discover it. Observe, 5. The poor man's humble request, and Christ's gracious reply : *if thou canst do any thing, help us*, says the father : *If thou canst believe, all things are possible*, says our Saviour. Note thence, That the fault is not in Christ, but in ourselves, if we receive not that mercy from him which we desire and need. There is no deficiency in Christ's power ; the defect lies in our faith. Hereupon the man *cries out with tears, Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief*. If these were tears of joy for the truth of his faith, then we may gather, that the lowest degree and least measure of faith is matter of joy unspeakable to the owner and possessor of it. If these were tears of sorrow for the weakness of his faith, then we may collect, that the remains of unbelief in the children of God do cost them many tears ; they are the burden and sorrow of gracious souls : *The father of the child cried out with tears, Lord, I believe : help thou mine unbelief*. Observe, 6. With what facility and ease our Saviour cast out this stubborn devil, that had so long possessed this poor child : even with a

word speaking. How long soever Satan has kept possession of a soul, Christ can eject and cast him out both easily and speedily ; one word of Christ's mouth is sufficient to help us out of all distress, both bodily and spiritual. Yet did our Lord suffer the wicked spirit to rage, and rend the child before he went out of him : not from any delight in the poor child's misery, but that the multitude, seeing the desperateness of the case, might the more admire the power of Christ in his deliverance. Observe, 7. The sovereign power and absolute authority, which Christ had even here on earth, when in his state of humiliation, over the devil and his angels : he commands him to go out, and enter no more into the child, and is obeyed. This was a proof and demonstration of the Godhead of our Saviour, that he had power and authority over devils to command and overrule them, to curb and restrain them, at his pleasure. And whereas Christ commands the devil not only to come out, but to enter no more into the person ; it implies that Satan being cast out of his hold, earnestly desires to enter in again to recover his hold, and to regain his possession ; but if Christ says, Enter no more, Satan shall obey his voice. Observe, 8. The disciples inquire into the reasons why they could not cast this stubborn devil out, according to the power which he had given them to work miracles. Christ tells them it was, 1. Because of their unbelief ; by which understand the weakness of their faith, not their total want of faith. 2. Because they did not in this extraordinary case apply themselves to the use of extraordinary means ; namely, *prayer and fasting*. Learn hence, First, That in extraordinary cases, where the necessities either of soul or body do require it, recourse must be had to the use of extraordinary means ; one of which is an importunate application unto God by solemn prayer. Secondly, That fasting and prayer are two special means of Christ's own appointment for the enabling of his people victoriously to overcome Satan, and cast him out of ourselves or others. We must set an edge upon our faith by prayer, and upon our prayer by fasting.

30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee ; and he would not that any man should know it. 31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the

hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. 32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

Observable it is, how frequently our Saviour forewarned his disciples of his approaching sufferings; and as the time of his sufferings drew near, he did more frequently warn them of it. But all was little enough to arm them against the scandal of the cross, and to reconcile their thoughts to a suffering condition. The disciples had taken up the common opinion, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, and as such to reign here upon earth, and they knew not how to reconcile this with his *being delivered up into the hands of men that should kill him*; and yet they were afraid to ask him concerning this matter. Now from Christ's frequent forewarning his disciples of approaching sufferings, we may gather, That we can never hear either too often, or too much, of the doctrine of the cross, nor be too frequently instructed in our duty to prepare for a suffering state. As Christ went by his cross to his crown, from a state of abasement to a state of exaltation, so must all his disciples and followers likewise.

33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves who *should be* the greatest. 35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, *the same shall be last of all, and servant of all*. 36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

It may justly seem a wonder, that when our blessed Saviour discoursed so frequently with his disciples about his sufferings, they should at the same time be disputing among themselves about precedency and pre-emi-

nency, which of them should be the greatest, the first in place, and the highest in dignity and honour. But from this instance we may learn, That the holiest and best of men are subject to pride and ambition, prone to covet worldly dignity and greatness, ready to catch at the bait of honour, to affect a precedency before, and a superiority over others. The apostles themselves were touched, if not tainted, with the itch of ambition. To cure which, our Saviour preaches to them the doctrine of humility. Where observe, 1. Our Lord doth not say, *He that is the first, but, he that desireth to be first, shall be last of all, and servant of all*. Teaching us, That all persons in general, and ministers in particular, ought not to seek out places of dignity and pre-eminency for themselves, but be sought out for them; he that is first in seeking them, usually least deserves them, and last obtains them: *if a man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all*. Observe, 2. Our Saviour teaches his disciples humility by the type and example of a little child, which he sets before them as the proper emblem of humility; showing them, that they ought to be as free from ambition as a young child, which affects nothing of precedency or superiority. Such as are of the highest eminency in the church of Christ, ought to be adorned with humility, and look upon themselves as lying under the greatest obligations to be most eminently useful and serviceable for the church's good. Observe, 3. How exceeding dear and precious such persons are to Christ, who resemble little children in true humility and lowliness of mind; assuring the world, that whatsoever kindness or respect they show to them, he accounts shown to himself: *He that receiveth them, says Christ, receiveth me*. So near is the union, so dear the relation, betwixt Christ and his members, that whatsoever good or evil is done to them, he reckons it as done unto himself.

38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me. 40 For he that is not against us is on our part. 41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to

drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward. 42 And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

The evangelist here sets down a conference betwixt our Saviour Christ and St. John his disciple. Where observe, 1. St. John's relation of a matter of fact to Christ, namely his forbidding one to cast out devils in Christ's name, that did not follow Christ as they did, being his professed disciples. Though only the disciples that followed Christ had a commission to work miracles, yet there were others, no enemies to Christ, who, in imitation of the disciples, did attempt to do the like; and God was pleased, for the honour of his Son, in whose name they cast out devils, to give them sometimes success. Almighty God may, and sometimes doth, give success to such actions and enterprises as are good in themselves, though undertaken by persons that have no lawful call or warrant from God to do them. However, it was no small confirmation of the truth of christianity, that Christ's name was thus powerful, even among those that did not follow him, and therefore could do nothing by compact with him. Observe, 2. The action of the disciples toward this person: *We forbid him*. This showed, 1. Their ignorance, in supposing that none could be true disciples, nor work miracles, but such as followed them: *We forbid him, because he followed not us*. Their rashness, in forbidding him of their own heads, before they had consulted Christ about it. 2. Their envy and emulation, in that they were grieved and discontented at this person's casting out devils, because he was not a follower of them. O the imperfect composition of the best of saints! how much weakness, infirmity, and corruption, doth John the beloved disciple discover upon this occasion! The sin of envy and emulation against the gift of God in others, is very natural to man, and to good men; yea, to the best of men. It is as difficult to look upon other men's gifts without envy, as to look upon our own without pride. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's answer and reply: *Forbid him not*. Because our Saviour knew that his enterprise of casting out devils in his name, would in some

manner and measure redound to the glory of his name, although he undertook the matter without sufficient warrant from Christ. We ought not to censure and condemn those who do that which is good in itself, though they fail in the manner of it, and in the means they use for effecting it. Observe, 4. What encouragement our Saviour gives the world to be kind to his friends and followers. He assures them *that even a cup of cold water given for his sake*, to such as profess his name, shall *not miss of a reward*. Learn thence, That the least office of love and respect, of kindness and charity, shewn to any of the ministers or members of Jesus Christ, for his sake, is represented as done unto himself, and shall be rewarded by himself. Observe, 5. He shall gain that which he cannot lose, by parting with that which he could not keep. Observe, 6. What a heinous and grievous sin it is to scandalize or offend any of the disciples of Jesus Christ; he will most severely judge and punish such as give offence to them, by any wrong or injury done unto them, both in this life and the next: *It were better a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea*.

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. - 45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched! 46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

In the former verse our Saviour dissuaded from the sin of scandal, or giving offence to serious and sincere christians, threatening a very grievous judgment against such as should any ways offend them: now in these six verses he prescribes a remedy against that and all other sins, namely, by

avoiding all occasions that lead to sin. Here observe, 1. The admonition or warning given by Christ unto us, to remove far from us all occasion of sin, though never so dear unto us. We are not to understand the command literally, as if it were our duty to maim our bodily members; but metaphorically, to cut off all occasions that may betray us into sin. Hence note, That sin may be avoided, it is our duty to avoid whatever leads unto it, or may be the instrument and occasion of it. Observe, 2. A reason enforcing the admonition: this is drawn from the benefit and advantage that will come by cutting off such occasions of sin. It will further us in our attainment of eternal life, and prevent our being cast into hell-fire. Now our Saviour affirms that it is better for a man to enter into life with the loss of all those things that are dear and precious to him in this world, rather than go into hell with the fruition and enjoyment of them. Learn hence, That a diligent and daily care to avoid sin, and all occasions that lead unto it, will be a special means to escape the torments of hell, and further us in our attainments of heaven and eternal life. Observe, 3. The description which our Saviour gives of the torments of hell; first, by its extremity; it is like a *gnawing worm*, and a *consuming fire*. Secondly, and by its eternity; a worm that *never dieth*, and a fire that is *never quenched*. Where note, That the remembrance of things past, the experience of things present, and expectation of things to come, are the bitings of the worm of conscience, at every bite whereof damned souls give a dreadful shriek; such as will not hear the voice of conscience, shall feel, and that to purpose, the sting of conscience. Learn hence, That there is most certainly a place and state of punishment and torment as another world for wicked men to suffer in, upon the score of sin committed in this world. Secondly, That the punishment and torments of the wicked in hell are intolerable and interminable, of exquisite pain, and endless duration: *Their worm never dieth, and their fire is not quenched*.

49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

*Every one shall be salted with fire*: that is, every one of them mentioned in the foregoing verses, who refuse to cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right

eye; that is, to mortify their bosom lusts, and beloved corruptions, which are as dear as a right hand or a right eye; every such wicked and unmortified person *shall be salted with fire*; that is, *thrown into hell-fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*; as our Saviour speaks, ver. 44. And the being *salted with fire*, imports and implies, that as to their beings they shall be preserved, even as salt preserves things from corruption; that they may be the objects of the eternal wrath of God. So that for sinners to be *salted with fire*, is to be given up to everlasting destruction. Learn hence, That all such unsavoury sinners as indulge their corrupt lusts and affections, shall be salted with fire; that is, given up to everlasting destruction in hell-fire. *But every sacrifice shall be salted with salt*; that is, every christian who has given himself a real sacrifice unto God, shall be salted, not with fire, but with salt; not with fire, to be consumed and destroyed, but with salt, to be preserved and kept savoury. The grace of mortification is that to the soul, which salt is to the body; it preserves it from putrefaction, and renders it savoury. Learn hence, 1. That every christian in this life ought to be a spiritual sacrifice or oblation unto God. 2. That there is a putrid and corrupt part in every sacrifice, in every christian, which must be purged out, and the sacrifice purified and cleansed from. 3. That the grace of mortification is the true salt which must clarify the soul, and with which every sacrifice must be salted, that will be a savoury offering unto God: *Every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt*.

50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Our blessed Saviour here compares christians in general, his ministers in particular, unto salt, for a double reason. First, Because it is the nature of salt to preserve things from corruption and putrefaction, and to render them savoury and pleasant. Thus are the ministers of Christ to labour and endeavour, by the purity of their doctrine, to sweeten putrefying sinners, that they may become savoury unto God and man, and be kept from being fly-blown with errors and false doctrines. Secondly, Because salt has an acrimony, a piercing



power in it, which subdues the whole lump, and turns it into its own nature. Such a piercing power is there in the ministry of the word, that it subdues the whole man to the obedience of itself. *Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another*; that is, let all persons, especially ministers, retain a seasoning virtue in themselves, that they may sweeten and season others, even all they converse with; and as salt has an uniting power, and knits the parts of the body salted together, so upholding of union and peace one with another, will declare that you have salt in yourselves. Learn hence, That it is the duty of all christians, but especially the ministers of the gospel, to maintain brotherly concord and agreement among themselves, both as an argument of their sincerity, and an ornament to their profession.

## CHAP. X.

**A**ND he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again. 2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him. 3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? 4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away. 5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept: 6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. 7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain but one flesh. 9 What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. 10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*. 11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

The first verse of this chapter acquaints us with the great labour and pains our Saviour took in the exercise of his ministry, travelling from place to place, in a hot country, and that on foot, to preach the gospel, when he was here upon earth: teaching all persons, but especially ministers, by his example, to be willing to undergo pains and labour, even unto much weariness, in the service of God, and in the duties of their calling. For this is God's ordinance, that every one should feel the burden of his calling, and the painfulness of it. But, Lord, how nice and delicate are some labourers in the vineyard, who are willing to do nothing but what they can do with ease: they cannot endure to think of labouring unto weariness, but are sparing of their pains for fear of shortening their days, and hastening their end! Whereas the lamp of our lives can never be better spent, or burnt out, than in lighting others to heaven. The following verses acquaint us with an ensnaring question which the Pharisees put to our Saviour concerning the matter of divorce: concluding that they should entrap him in his answer, whatever it was: if he denied the lawfulness of divorce, then they would charge him with contradicting Moses, who allowed it. If he affirmed it, then they would condemn him for contradicting his own doctrine, St. Matt. v. 32. for favouring men's lusts, and complying with the wicked custom of the Jews, who upon every slight and frivolous occasion put away their wives from them. But such was the wisdom of our Saviour in all his answers to the ensnaring Pharisees, that neither their wit nor malice could lay hold upon any thing to entangle him in his talk. Observe, therefore, The piety and prudence of our Saviour's answer to the Pharisees; he refers them to the first institution of marriage, when God made husband and wife one flesh, to the intent that matrimonial love might be both incommunicable and indissoluble; and accordingly asks them, *What did Moses command you?* Thereby teaching us, that the best means for deciding all doubts, and resolving all controversies about matters of religion, is to have recourse unto the scripture, or the written word of God. *What did Moses command you?* Observe farther, How our Saviour, to confute the Pharisees, and convince them of the unlawfulness of divorce, used by the Jews, lays down the first institution of marriage, and shows them first

the Author, next the time, then the end, of the institution. The author, God : *What God hath joined together, &c.* Marriage is an ordinance of God's own appointment, as the ground and foundation of all sacred and civil society. The time of the institution was, in the beginning : marriage is almost as old as the world, as old as nature itself : there was no sooner one person, but God divided him into two ; and no sooner was there two, but he united them in one. And the end of the institution of marriage Christ declares was this, That there might be not only an intimacy and nearness, but also an inseparable union and oneness, by means of this endearing relation ; the conjugal knot is tied so close, that the bonds of matrimonial love are stronger than those of nature. Stricter is the tie betwixt husband and wife, than that betwixt parent and child, according to God's own appointment : *For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.* And whereas our Saviour adds, *What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder ;* two things are hereby intimated to us, 1. That God is the author of the close and intimate union which is betwixt man and wife in a married condition. 2. That it is not in the power of man to untie or dissolve that union which God has made betwixt man and wife in the married state : yea, it is a great sin to advise unto, or endeavour after, the separation of them. Observe lastly, Our Saviour's private conference with the disciples, after his public disputation with the Pharisees, about this matter of divorce. He tells his disciples, and in them he tells all christians to the end of the world, that it is utterly unlawful for a man and wife to be separated by divorcement one from another, for any cause whatsoever, except *only for the sin of adultery* committed by either of them after the marriage. Learn hence, That according to the word and will of God, nothing can violate the bonds of marriage, and justify a divorce betwixt man and wife, save only the defiling of the marriage bed by adultery and uncleanness. This is the only case in which man and wife may lawfully part : and being for this case parted, whether they may afterwards marry again to other persons has been much disputed ; but that the innocent and injured person, whether man or woman, (for these is an equal right on both sides,)

may not marry again, seems very unreasonable ; for why should one suffer for another's fault ?

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them : and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*. 14 But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16 And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them.

Observe here, A solemn action performed : children are brought to Christ to be blessed by him. Where note, 1. The persons brought : *children*, young children, sucking children, as the word imports, St. Luke xviii. 15. *They brought them in their arms*, not led them by the hands. 2. The Person they are brought unto : *Jesus Christ*. But for what end ? Not to baptize them, but to bless them : the parents looking upon Christ as a prophet, a great prophet, the great Prophet, do bring their infants to him, that they might receive the benefit of his blessing and prayers. Whence learn, 1. That infants are capable of benefit by Jesus Christ. 2. That it is the best office that parents can perform unto their children to bring them unto Christ, that they may be made partakers of that benefit. 3. If infants be capable of benefit by Christ, if capable of his blessing on earth and presence in heaven, if they be subjects of his kingdom of grace, and heirs of his kingdom of glory, then they may be baptized ; for they that are in covenant, have a right to the seal of the covenant. If Christ denies not infants the kingdom of heaven, which is the greater, what reason have ministers to deny them the benefit of baptism, which is the less ?

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ?

Observe here, 1. A person addressing himself to Christ with an important ques-

tion in his mouth. This person was a young man, a rich man, and a ruler; a young man in the prime of his age, a rich man in the fulness of his wealth, and a ruler in the prime of his authority and power. From whence learn, That for young men, rich men, especially noblemen, to enquire the way to salvation, is very commendable, but very rare. Observe, 2. As the person addressing, so the manner of the address: he came running, and kneeled to Christ. Where observe, his voluntariness: he *came* of himself, not drawn by others' importunity, but drawn by his own personal affections. And his readiness: he came *running*. This showed his zeal and forwardness to meet with Christ, and be resolved by him. And, lastly, his humility: he *kneeled to him*, as an eminent prophet and teacher, not knowing him to be the Son of God. Observe, 3. The address itself, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Where note, 1. He believes the certainty of a future state. 2. He professes his desire of an eternal happiness in that state. 3. He declares his readiness to do some good thing, in order to the obtaining of that happiness. Hence learn, That the light of nature, or natural religion, teaches men that good works are necessary to salvation: or that some good thing must be done by them, who at death expect eternal life. It is not talking well, and professing well, but doing well, that entitles us to heaven and eternal life.

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.*

As if Christ had said, *Why callest thou me good*, when thou dost not believe or own me to be God? *for there is none good*, that is, essentially and originally good, absolutely and immutably good, but God only; nor any derivatively good, but he that receiveth his goodness from God also: there is no mere man that is absolutely and perfectly good of himself, but by participation and derivation from God only. See the note on St. Matt. xix. 17.

19 Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

Observe here, That the duties which our Saviour instances in, are the duties of the se-

cond table, which hypocrites are most failing in. But nothing is a better evidence of our unfeigned love to God, than the sincere performance of our duty to our neighbours. Love to man is a fruit and testimony of our love to God; for *he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* 1 John iv. 20. Learn hence, That such as are defective in the duties of the second table, charity and justice, do make but a counterfeit show of religion, though they pretend to the highest measures and degrees of love to God. Here note, That there are two ways of injuring our neighbour, which ought to be avoided, namely, 1. By theft: and this either privately and clandestinely, without the knowledge of the owner; or openly and by force, against the consent of the owner: both these are forbidden in the eighth commandment. 2. By secret and cunning devices, where the law and a picture of right is made use of to cover the injury. This is forbidden in the tenth commandment, and here expressed by, *Thou shalt not defraud*. And surely all such endeavours to defraud, must show a very covetous mind, inclining a person, against the dictates of his own conscience, to defraud another of his right.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

This assertion of the young man might be very true, according to the Pharisees' sense and interpretation of the law, which condemned only the gross outward act, not the inward lust and motion of the heart. An outside obedience to the law this young man had performed; this made him think well of himself, and conclude the goodness of his own condition. Learn hence, How prone men are to think the best of themselves, and to have too high an opinion of their own goodness and righteousness before God: *All these things have I kept from my youth*. It is a natural corruption in men to think too well of themselves, and of their own goodness and righteousness before God; but it is very dangerous and fatal so to do.

21 Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross,

and follow me. 22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

Observe here, 1. Christ's compassion towards this young man. He loved him with a love of pity and compassion, with a love of courtesy and respect. There may be some very amiable and lovely qualities in natural and unregenerate men; and goodness, in what kind or degree soever it is, doth attract and draw forth Christ's love towards a person. If Christ did love civility, what respect has he for sincere sanctity! Observe, 2. Our Lord's admonition: *One thing thou lackest*, which was, true self-denial, in renouncing the sin of covetousness, and the inordinate love of worldly wealth. We ought, upon God's call, to maintain such a readiness of mind, as to be willing to part with all for God's sake which is dear unto us in this world. Observe, 3. Our Lord's injunction: *Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor*. This was not a common but a special precept, belonging particularly to this young man. It was a commandment of trial given to him, like that given to Abraham, *Gen. xxii.* to convince him of his corrupt confidence in his riches: yet it is thus far of general use to us all, to teach us to condemn worldly possessions, as to be willing to part with them when they hinder our happiness and salvation. It follows, *And take up thy cross*; an allusion to the Roman custom, when the malefactor was to be crucified, he bore his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution. It is not the taking, but the patient bearing, of the cross, which is our duty. Learn That all Christ's followers should prepare their shoulders for Christ's cross. To bear the cross, implies faithfulness and integrity without shifting, patience and submission without murmuring, joy and cheerfulness without fainting. Observe, 4. The effect which our Saviour's admonition had upon this young person: *He was sad and grieved at that saying*. Thence note, That carnal men are sad and exceeding sorrowful, when they cannot win heaven in their own way. 2. That such as are wedded to the world, will renounce Christ rather than the world, when the world and Christ stand in competition.

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches

enter into the kingdom of God! 24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

From this discourse of our holy Lord's concerning the danger of riches, and the difficulty that attends rich men in their way to heaven, we may collect and gather, first, That rich men do certainly meet with more difficulties in their way to heaven than other men. It is difficult to withdraw their affections from riches, to place their supreme love upon God in the midst of their abundance. It is difficult to depend entirely upon God in a rich condition; *for the rich man's wealth is his strong tower*. Secondly, That yet the fault lies not in riches, but in rich men: who by placing their trust, and reposing their confidence in riches, do render themselves incapable of the kingdom of God. Observe, 3. The proverbial speech which our Saviour makes use of to set forth the difficulty of a rich man's salvation: *It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye*. This was a proverb among the Jews, signifying a thing of great difficulty, next to an impossibility; and it implies thus much, that it is not only a very great difficulty, but an utter impossibility, for such as abound in worldly wealth, and place their confidence therein, to be saved, without an extraordinary grace and assistance from God. It is hard for God to make a rich man happy, because he thinks himself happy without God. Observe, 4. The disciples are affected with wonder and admiration at this doctrine of our Saviour's, and cry out, *Who then can be saved?* Learn thence, That such are the special and peculiar difficulties which lie in the rich man's way to salvation, that their getting to heaven is matter of wonder and admiration to the disciples of Christ. Observe,

5. How our Saviour resolves this doubt, by telling his disciples, that what was impossible with men, was possible with God; implying, that it is impossible for any man, rich or poor, by his own natural strength to get to heaven. And, 2. That when we are discouraged with the sense of our own impotency, we should consider the power of God, and fix our faith upon it: *With God all things are possible.*

28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. 29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, 30 But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. 31 But many *that are first shall be last; and the last first.*

The apostles having heard our Saviour's command to sell all and give to the poor, St. Peter, in the name of the rest, tells Christ, that *they had left all to follow him.* Where note, How Peter magnifies that little which he had left for Christ, and values it in with a note of admiration: *Lo! we have left all.* Learn hence, That though it be very little that we suffer for Christ, and have to forsake upon his account, yet are we apt to magnify and extol it, as if it were some great matter: *Behold, we have left all and followed thee.* Observe next, Our Lord's kind and gracious answer: that those that leave all to follow him shall be no losers by him. We may be losers for Christ, we shall never be losers by him; for whatever we part with in this world for the sake of Christ, *houses or lands, brethren or sisters, we shall receive an hundred-fold now in this life.* But how so? *Non formaliter, sed eminenter; non in specie, sed in valore:* "Not in kind, but in equivalency:" not an hundred brethren, sisters, or lands, in kind, but he shall enjoy that in God, which all creatures would be to him if they were multiplied an hundred times; and the gifts and graces, the comforts and consolations, of the Holy Spirit shall be an hundred times better por-

tion than any thing we can part with for the sake of Christ. For the sense of those words, *The first shall be last, &c.* see the note on *Matth. xx. 19.*

32 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, 33 *Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: 34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him; and the third day he shall rise again.*

This is at least the third time that Christ had acquainted his disciples with his approaching sufferings. The first time he told his disciples of his death in general; the second time he declares the means, by treason; now he tells them the manner by crucifying him: all this he did to prevent their dejection at his sufferings. Learn hence, That it is highly necessary that the doctrine of the cross be often preached to us, that so being armed with expectations of sufferings before they come, we may be the less dismayed and disheartened when they come. Our Lord's forewarning his disciples so frequently of his death and sufferings, was to fore-arm them with expectations of his sufferings, and with preparation for their own. Observe farther, Who were the persons that were the instrumental causes of our Saviour's death: they were both Jews and Gentiles: *The Son of man shall be delivered to the chief priests, and they shall deliver him to the Gentiles.* As both Jews and Gentiles had a hand in the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, so are they by faith capable of an interest in the merit of his death, and in the virtue and efficacy of his sufferings. Christ offered up his blood to God on behalf of them that shed it.

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall de-

sire. 36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you ? 37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. 38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask : can ye drink of the cup that I drink of ? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ? 39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of ; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized : 40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give ; but *it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.* 41 And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

Observe here, 1. The ambitious suit and request of the two apostles, James and John, for dignity and superiority ; *Grant that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory or in thy kingdom.* Where observe, That by Christ's kingdom and glory, they understood an earthly, temporal kingdom : for of that sort the Jews did expect the kingdom of the Messiah should be, and the disciples themselves were tainted with the common errors. Learn hence, That ambition and inordinate desire of worldly wealth and dignity, is a sin very natural and incident to the best of men. Who can wonder to see some sparks of ambition in the holiest of God's ministers, when Christ's own apostles were not free from aspiring thoughts, even when they lay in the bosom of our Saviour ? Observe, 2. Both the unseasonableness and unreasonableness of this request made by James and John : Christ speaks of his sufferings to them, and they sue for dignity and great places from him : *In optimis non nihil est pessimi.* The holiest, the wisest, and the best of men, are not wholly free from passionate infirmities. Who could have thought, that when our Saviour had been preaching the doctrine of the cross to his disciples, that they should at the same time be seeking and suing to him for secular dignity and honour, pre-

eminence and power ! But the best of men are but men ; none are in a state of perfection on this side heaven. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's answer to his disciples' ambitious request, and the course which he takes, to cool their ambition ; he tells them, they must expect here, not crowns on their heads, but a cross on their backs ; they must first taste of his sufferings, before they partake of his glory ; and they that suffer most for Christ, shall partake of the highest dignity and glory from him. Observe, 4. The presumptuous confidence which the apostles had of their own strength and ability for sufferings : *Are ye able, says Christ, to drink of my cup ? We are able,* say the disciples. Alas, poor men, when it came to the trial, they all cowardly forsook him and fled. Those that are least acquainted with suffering are usually the most confident undertakers. See note on *Matt.* xx. 22, 23.

42 But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them ; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. 43 But so shall it not be among you : but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister : 44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. 45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

To the end that our blessed Saviour might effectually quench those unhappy sparks of ambition which were kindled in his apostles' minds, he tells them, that supremacy and dominion belong to secular princes, not to gospel-ministers, who ought to carry themselves with humility and condescension one towards another. Not that Christ directs to a parity and equality amongst his ministers, but only condemns the affectation of superiority, and the love of pre-eminency. Learn hence, 1. That the ministers of Christ ought to be so far from affecting a domination and superiority over their brethren, that in imitation of their Lord and Master, they ought to account themselves fellow-servants : *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.* Observe, 2. That

such ministers as do love and affect pre-eminence and superiority are most unfit for it; and they deserve it best who seek it least. 3. That the dignity and honour which the ministers of Christ should chiefly, yea only affect, is in another world; and the way to be greatest and highest there, is to be low and humble, mean in our own eyes, and little in our own esteem. See note on *Matt.* xx. 28.

46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway side, begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, *thou son of David*, have mercy on me. 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, *Thou son of David*, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

This chapter concludes with the recital of a famous miracle wrought by our blessed Saviour upon blind Bartimeus, in the sight of a great multitude which followed him. Where note, 1. The blind man's faith, in acknowledging Jesus to be the Messiah; for so much the title of the *son of David* signified. 2. His fervency, in crying so earnestly to Christ for mercy and healing: *Have mercy upon me, thou son of David*. A true sense of want will make the soul cry unto Christ with earnestness and importunity. Observe, 3. The great compassion and condescension of Christ towards this poor blind man: he stood still, he called him, and enlightened his eyes. A mighty instance of Christ's divine power! He that can open blind eyes with a touch of his fin-

ger, and that by his own power, is really God: his touch is an omnipotent touch. Observe, 4. Although Christ well knew the condition of this blind man, yet, before he will restore his sight, he must sensibly complain of the want of sight, and cry unto him for help and healing. Christ knows all his creatures' wants, but takes no notice of them till they make them known to him by prayer. Observe, 5. The way and course which the blind man takes to express his thankfulness to Christ for recovered sight: *He rose, and followed Jesus*. Mercy from Christ is then well improved, when it engages us to follow Christ. This should be the effect of all salvations wrought for us. He praiseth God best that serveth him most: the life of thankfulness consists in the thankfulness of the life.

#### CHAP. XI.

AND when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, 2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. 4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. 5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye loosing the colt? 6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with our Saviour's solemn and triumphant riding into the city of Jerusalem: he who in all his journeys travelled like a poor man on foot, without noise, and without train; now he goes up to Jerusalem to die for sinners, he rides, to show his great forwardness to lay down his life for us: the beast he rides on is an *ass*, as the manner of kings and great persons anciently was, and to fulfil that prophecy, *Zech. ix. 9. Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy king cometh riding upon an ass*. It was also an *ass*.

upon which *never man sat before*; signifying thereby, that the most unruly and untamed creatures become obsequious to Christ. Grotius observes, that such animals as had not been employed in the use of man, were wont to be chosen for sacred uses. Even heathens adjudged those things most proper for the service of the gods, which had never been put to profane uses. Thus in 1 *Sam.* vi. 7. we read that the Philistines returned the ark in a new cart, drawn by heifers never before put into the yoke; they thinking them polluted by being put to profane work. Our Saviour here chooses an ass which had never been backed before; and that the colt should so patiently suffer Christ to ride upon him, was miraculous. And this was a borrowed ass, whereby our Saviour's right to all the creatures was manifested; and accordingly he bids his disciples tell the owner *that the Lord hath need of him*. Not *your* Lord or *our* Lord, but *the* Lord: that is, he that is Lord of all, whose are the *cattle on a thousand hills*. Observe farther, That notwithstanding Christ's supreme right to the colt, he will not have it taken without the owner's knowledge and consent: *Tell him that the Lord hath need of him*. Observe lastly, What a clear and full demonstration Christ gave of his divine nature; of his omniscency in foreseeing and foretelling the event; of his omnipotency, in inclining the heart, and overruling the will, of the owner to let the colt go; and of his sovereignty, as he was Lord of the creatures, to command and call for their service when he needed them.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. 8 And many spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way. 9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

Observe here, The obedience of his disciples. First, They did as Jesus had commanded, they do not dispute their Lord's commands, nor raise objections, nor are afraid of dangers: when our call is clear, our obedience must be speedy; what

Christ commands we are not to dispute, but to obey. Observe, 2. The actions of the multitude in acknowledging Christ to be their King; they cast their garments on the ground for him to ride upon, according to the custom of princes when they ride in state; and do not only disrobe their backs, but expend their breath in joyful acclamations, and loud hosannas, wishing all manner of prosperity to their meek but mighty King. In this princely, yet poor and despicable pomp, doth our Saviour enter the famous city of Jerusalem. O how far was our holy Lord from affecting worldly greatness and grandeur! He despised that glory which worldly hearts fondly admire; yet because he was a King, he would be proclaimed such, and have his kingdom confessed, applauded, and blessed. But that it might appear that his kingdom was not of this world, he abandons all worldly magnificence. O glorious, yet homely pomp! O meek, but mighty Prince!

11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the evening was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. 12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: 13 And seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. 14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

Some move the question here, how Christ came to curse a tree for want of that fruit which the season afforded not? It is answered, that naturalists observe, that the fig-tree puts forth her fruit as soon as her leaf; that tree is always bearing; and while one fig is ripe, another is green. And whereas it is said, *that the time of figs was not yet*; the meaning is, "That the time of in-gathering of figs was not yet," but the tree having leaves, showing it might have fruit: accordingly Christ goes in expectation of it having fruit; but finding none, either ripe or green, he curses the tree for totally disappointing his expectation. Besides, Christ was wont not



only to speak, but to work parables; and this action of his was typical, an emblem of Jerusalem's destruction in general, and of every person's in particular, that satisfies himself with a withered profession; bearing leaves only, but no fruit; as this fig-tree was, so are they, nigh unto cursing. From whence note, That all such as content themselves with a fruitless profession of religion, are in great danger, of having God's blasting added to their barrenness.

15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16 And would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple. 17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. 19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

No sooner had our blessed Saviour entered Jerusalem, but his first walk was to the temple, and his first work there was to purge and reform. All reformation of manners must begin at the house of God. Yet observe, Our Lord's business at the temple was not to ruin, but to reform it only. Places dedicated to public worship, if profaned and polluted, ought to be purged from their abuses, not pulled down and destroyed, because they have been abused. But what was the profanation of the temple which so offended our Saviour? I answer, in the outward court of the temple there was a public mart or market kept, where were sold oxen, sheep, and doves, for sacrifice. Many of the Jews coming an hundred miles to the temple, it was burdensome to bring their sacrifice so far with them; wherefore the priests ordered, that sheep and oxen, meal and oil, and such other requisites for sacrifice, should be had for money close by the altar, to the great ease of the offerer: nothing could be more plausible than this plea. But the fairest pretences cannot bear out a sin with God. Therefore our blessed

Saviour in a just indignation whips out those chapmen, casts down their tables, and vindicates the honour and reputation of his Father's house. Learn hence, That there is a reverence due to God's house for the owner's sake, and for the service sake. Nothing but holiness can become the place where God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness. Observe lastly, The reason which our Saviour gives for this act of his, *Is it not written, says he, My house shall be called the house of prayer?* Where by prayer it is to be understood the whole worship and service of God, of which prayer is an eminent and principal part. That which gives denomination to an house is certainly the chief work to be done in that house. Now God's house being called an house of prayer, certainly implies, that prayer is the chief and principal work to be performed in this house. Yet take we heed, that we set not the ordinances of God at variance; we must not idolize one ordinance, and vilify another, but reverence them all.

20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away! 22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

The blasting and sudden withering of the fig-tree at the word of Christ, plainly showed his divine power, and by this miraculous operation, our Saviour designed to show his disciples the mighty power of faith; that is, a full persuasion of the power of God, that he is able, and of the goodness of God, that he is willing, to grant whatever we ask according to his will, that has a tendency to his glory and our good. Learn hence, That faith is a necessary and principal ingre-

dient in prayer. Praying without faith, is like to a man's shooting without a bullet; it makes a noise, but doth no execution. Secondly, That whatsoever good thing God has made the matter of his promise, shall be given to good men in a way of performance, provided they pray in faith: *Whatsoever ye desire believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

23 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

There are two qualifications requisite in prayer, if we expect to find acceptance with God, namely, faith and love; to the first Christ had spoken in the former verse, to the latter in this: *When we stand praying, forgive.* It was ordinary for the Jews to pray standing, yet in their solemn days of fasting they did kneel, and prostrate themselves before the Lord; but the Christians usually kneeled down and prayed, *Acts ix. 40.* Now the command here to forgive those that offend us before we pray, shows, 1. That no resentments of what our brother doth, should stick long upon our spirits, because they indispose us for that duty we are to be continually prepared for. 2. That there is some sort and kind of forgiveness to be exercised towards an offending brother before he asks it, and though he doth not show any token of repentance and sorrow for it; because I am to pray for him out of love unto him, and must lift up pure hands, without wrath. Learn hence, That they who are suing for, and expecting forgiveness from God, must exercise forgiveness towards others, or else their prayers are a sort of imprecations upon themselves. Observe, Christ speaks indefinitely: *When ye pray forgive.* He doth not say, Your brethren, but, Men: *Matt. vi. 14.* *If we forgive men their trespasses;* that is, all men, good and bad, friends and enemies; if we forgive one another freely, our heavenly Father will forgive us fully. Our forgiving one another is the indispensable condition of God's forgiving us, and of hearing the prayers which are put up by us.

27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the

chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? 29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority, I do these things. 30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. 31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed. 33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The Pharisees having often questioned our Saviour's doctrine before, they call in question his mission and authority now, although they might easily have understood his divine mission by his daily miracles; for Almighty God never empowered any to work miracles that were not sent by him. Our blessed Saviour understanding their design, answers them one question by asking them another: says Christ, *The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?* Was it of divine institution, or human invention? Implying very plainly, that the calling of such as call themselves the ministers of God, ought to be from God: *No man ought to take that honour upon him, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron, Heb. v. 4.* The Pharisees reply, they could not tell whence John had his mission and authority: this was a manifest untruth. By refusing to tell the truth, they fall into a lie against the truth; one sin ensnares and draws men into the commission of many more. Such as will not speak exact truth according to their knowledge, fall into the sin of lying against their knowledge and their conscience. Our Saviour answers them, *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.* He doth not say, I cannot, or will not, tell you, but I do not, I need not tell you; because the miracles which I work before you, are a sufficient

demonstration of my divine commission, that I am sent of God amongst you; for God never set the seal of his omnipotence to a lie, nor empowered an impostor to work real miracles.

### CHAP. XII.

**A**ND he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine-fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. 2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. 6 Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

In this parable, the Jewish church is compared to a vineyard: Almighty God to an householder; his planting, pruning, and fencing his vineyard, denotes his care to furnish his church with all needful helps and means to make it spiritually fruitful; his letting it out to husbandmen, signifies his committing the care of the church to the priests and Levites, the public pastors and governors of the church; his servants are the prophets and apostles, whom he sent time after time to admonish them to bring forth fruit answerable to the cost which God had expended on them; his Son is Jesus Christ, whom the rulers of the Jewish church slew and murdered. The design and scope of the parable is to discover to the Jews, particularly to the Pharisees,

their obstinate impenitency under all the means of grace, their bloody cruelty towards the prophets of God, their tremendous guilt in crucifying the Son of God: for all which God would unchurch them finally, ruin their nation, and set up a church among the Gentiles that should bring forth better fruit than the Jewish church ever did. From the whole note, 1. That the church is God's vineyard. A vineyard is a place inclosed, a place well planted, well fruited, and exceeding dear and precious to the planter and the owner of it. 2. As dear as God's vineyard is unto him, in case of barrenness and unfruitfulness, it is in great danger of being destroyed and laid waste by him. 3. That the only way and course to engage God's care over his vineyard, and to prevent its being given to other husbandmen, is to give him the fruit of it: it is but a vineyard that God lets out; it is no inheritance. No people ever had so many promises of God's favour as the Jews had, nor ever enjoyed so many privileges whilst they continued in his favour as they did; yet though they were the first and the natural branches, they are broken off and we Gentiles stand by faith: let us not be high-minded, but fear, Rom. xi. 20.

9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. 10 And have ye not read this scripture: The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people; for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

These words of our Saviour are taken out of the cxviii<sup>th</sup> Psalm, which the Jews understood to be a prophecy of the Messiah, and accordingly Christ applies them to himself: the church is the building intended, Christ himself the stone rejected. The rejecters, or the builders rejecting, are the heads of the Jewish church; that is, the chief priests and Pharisees. God, the great Master-builder of his church, takes this precious foundation-stone out of the rubbish, and sets it in the

head of the corner. Nevertheless, there are many that stumble at this stone; some through ignorance, others through malice: some are offended at his person, others at his doctrine: *These shall be broken in pieces; but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind them to powder*: that is, Christ himself will fall as a burdensome stone upon all them that knowingly and maliciously oppose him; and particularly to the Jews, who not only rejected, but persecuted and destroyed him. Thus Christ tells the chief priests and Pharisees their own particular doom, and also declares what will be the fatal issue of all that opposition which is made against himself and his church; it will terminate in the inevitable destruction of all its opposers: *Whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind them to powder.*

13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in *his* words. 14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth; Is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not? 15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. 16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cesar's. 17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

Observe here a grand design to entangle our blessed Saviour in his discourse. Where note, 1. The persons employed to put the ensnaring question to Christ, namely, the Pharisees and Herodians. The Pharisees were against paying tribute to Cesar, looking upon themselves as a free people, and the emperor as an usurper; but the Herodians were for it. Herod being made by the Roman emperor king over the Jews, he was very zealous for having the Jews

pay tribute to Cesar; and such of the Jews as sided with him, particularly his courtiers and favourites, were called Herodians. Note, 2. The policy and wicked craft here used, in employing these two contrary parties to put this question to our Saviour concerning tribute, thereby laying him under a necessity, as they hoped, to offend one side, let him answer how he would: if, to please the Pharisees, he denied paying tribute to Cesar, then he is accused of sedition; if, to gratify the Herodians, he voted for paying tribute to Cesar, then he is looked upon as an enemy to the liberty of his country, and exposed to a popular odium. Thus has it all along been the practice of Satan and his instruments, to draw the ministers of God into dislike, either with the magistrates or with the people, that they may fall under the censure of the one, or the displeasure of the other. Observe, 3. With what wisdom and caution our Lord answers them; he calls for the Roman penny, answering to seven-pence half-penny of our money, two of which they paid by way of tribute, as poll-money for every head, to the emperor. Christ asks them, *Whose image or superscription this their coin bore?* They answer, *Cesar's.* Render then, says he, to Cesar the things that are Cesar's. As if our Lord had said, "Your admitting of the Roman coin among you is an evidence that you are under subjection to the emperor, because the coining and imposing of money is an act of sovereign authority; therefore you have owned Cesar's authority over you by accepting of his coin amongst you; give unto him his just dues, and render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's." Learn hence, 1. That our Saviour was no enemy to the magistracy and civil government; there was no truer paymaster of the king's dues, than he that was King of kings; he preached it, and he practised it, *Matt. xvii. 27.* 2. Where a kingdom is in subjection to a temporal prince, whether his right be by descent, election, or by conquest, the subjects ought from a principle of conscience to pay tribute to him. 3. That as Christ is no enemy to the civil rights of princes, and his religion exempts none from paying their civil dues; so princes should be as careful not to rob him of his divine honour, as he is not to wrong them of their civil rights: as Christ requires all his followers to render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, so should princes oblige all

their subjects to *render unto God the things that are God's*.

18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died; neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. 26 And as touching the dead, that they rise; have ye not read in the book of Moses how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

Our blessed Saviour having put the Pharisees and Herodians to silence in the former verses, here he encounters the Sadducees. This sect derived its name from one Sadock, who denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and angels and spirits. Here they propound a case to our Saviour, of a woman who had seven brethren successively to her husband; they demand whose wife of the seven this woman shall be at the resurrection? As if they had said, "If there be a resurrection of bodies, surely there will be of relations too: and the other world, if there be such a place, will be like this, in which men will marry, as they do

here, and if so, whose wife of the seven shall this woman be, they all having an equal claim to her?" Now our Saviour, for resolving of this question, first shows the different state of men in this and in the other world. The children of this world, says our Saviour, marry, and are given in marriage; but in the resurrection they do neither. As if Christ had said, "After men have lived awhile in this world, they die, and therefore marriage is necessary to maintain a succession of mankind; but in the other world men shall become immortal, and live for ever, and then the reason of marriage will wholly cease; for when men can die no more, there will be no need of any new supplies of mankind. Observe, secondly, That our Saviour being got clear of the Sadducees' objection, by taking away the foundation and ground of it, he produceth an argument for the proof of the soul's immortality and the body's resurrection. "Those to whom Almighty God pronounces himself a God, are certainly alive; but God pronounces himself a God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, many hundred years after their bodies were dead, therefore their souls are yet alive; for otherwise God could not be their God; because *he is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. From the whole note, 1. That there is no opinion so monstrous and absurd, that, having had a mother, will die for lack of a nurse. The beastly opinion of the mortality of the soul, and the annihilation of the body, finds Sadducees to profess and propagate it. Note, 2. The certainty of another life after this, in which men shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable, according as they behave themselves here. Though some men live like beasts, yet they shall not die like them, nor shall their last end be like theirs. Note, 3. That glorified saints in the morning of the resurrection, shall be like the glorious angels; not like them in essence and nature, but like them in their properties and qualities, in holiness and purity, in immortality and incorruptibility; as also in their manner of living, they shall stand in no more need of meat and drink than the angels do, but shall live the same heavenly, immortal, and incorruptible life that the angels live. Note, 4. That all those who are in covenant with God, whose God the Lord is, their souls do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies at the resurrection shall be sharers in the same happiness with their souls; if God be just, their souls must live, and their bodies must

him; for good men must be rewarded, and wicked men punished somewhere, either in this life or in another. God will most certainly, at one time or other, plentifully reward the righteous, and punish the wicked doers. But, this being not always done in this life, the justice of God requires that it be done in the next.

28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment, 31 And the second is like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. 32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: 33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

Observe here, 1. A question propounded to our blessed Saviour, and his answer thereunto. The question propounded is this, *Which is the first and great commandment?* Our Saviour tells them, *It is to love God with all their heart and soul, with all their mind and strength*, that is, with all the powers, faculties, and abilities of the soul, with the highest measures, and most intense degrees of love; this is the sum of the duties of the first table: *This is the first and great commandment and the second is*

*like unto it*. He doth not say, Equal with it: although the duties of the second table are of the same authority, and of the same necessity with the first, as no man can be saved without the love of God, so neither without the love of his neighbour. Whence note, 1. That the fervency of all our affections, and particularly the supremacy of our love, is required by God as his right and due: love must pass through, and possess all the powers and faculties of our souls: the mind must meditate upon God, the will must choose and embrace him, and the affections must delight in him. The measure of loving God is to love him without measure: God reckons that we love him not at all, if we love him not above all. Note, 2. That thus to love God, is *the first and great commandment*, great in regard of its object, which is God, the first cause and the chief good; great in regard of the obligation of it. To love God is so indispensable a duty that God himself cannot free us from the obligation of it: for so long as he is God, and we his creatures, we shall lie under a natural and necessary obligation to love and serve him. Great also is this command and duty, in regard to the duration and continuance of it; when faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition, love will then be perfected in a full enjoyment. Note, 3. That every man may, yea ought to love himself: not his sinful self, but his natural self; especially his spiritual self, the new nature in him. This it ought to be his particular care to strengthen and increase. Indeed there is no express command in scripture for a man to love himself, because the light of nature directs, and the law of nature binds, every man so to do. God has put a principle of self-love, and of self-preservation, into all his creatures, but especially into man. Note, 4. That as every man ought to love himself; so is it every man's duty to *love his neighbour as himself*: not as he doth love himself but as he ought to love himself; yet not in the same degree that he loves himself, but after the same manner, and with the same kind of love that he loves himself. As we love ourselves freely and readily, sincerely and unfeignedly, tenderly and compassionately, constantly and continually, so should we love our neighbour also, though we love him not as much as we love ourselves, yet must we love him as truly as we love ourselves. Note, lastly, That the duties of the first and second table are inseparable,

namely, love to God, and love to our neighbour. These two must not be separated; he that loveth not his neighbour whom he hath seen, never loved God whom he hath not seen. A conscientious regard to the duties of both tables will be an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession. Observe, lastly, The favourable censure which our Saviour passes upon the scribe: he tells him, *he was not far from the kingdom of God*. Note here, 1. Some persons may be said to be far, and farther than others, from the kingdom of heaven; some are farther in regard of the means; they want the ordinances, the dispensation of the word and sacraments; others are far from the kingdom of God in regard of qualifications and dispositions; of the former sort are all heathens without the pale of the church; they are *afar off*, as the apostle expresses it, *Eph. ii. 13*. of the latter sort are all gross and close hypocrites within the church; who whilst they continue such, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Note, 2. As some persons may be said to be far from the kingdom of God, so are there others which may be said, *not to be far*; such who have escaped the pollutions of the world, abstained from open and scandalous sins, are less wicked than multitudes are, but are strangers to an inward, thorough, and prevailing change in the frame of their hearts, and course of their lives; they had often said, *I would be*, but they never said, *I will be*, the Lord's. When the work of regeneration is brought to the birth, after all it proves an abortion. Lord! what a disappointment will this be, to perish within sight of the promised land; to be near heaven in our expectation, and yet no nearer in the issue and event. Woe unto us, if this be the condition of any of us who have all our days sat under the dispensation of the gospel!

35 And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? 36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. 37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he *then* his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

The Pharisees had often put forth several

questions maliciously unto Christ, and now Christ puts forth one question innocently unto them; namely, what they thought of the Messiah whom they expected? They reply, that he was to be the son of David; that is, a secular prince descending from David, who should deliver them from the power of the Romans, and restore them to their civil rights. This was the notion they had of the Messiah, that he should be a mere man, the son of David according to the flesh, and nothing more. Our Saviour replies, *Whence is it then that David calls the Messiah, Lord, Psal. cx. 1. The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand*. How could he both be David's Lord and David's son? no son being lord to his own father. Therefore, if Christ were David's sovereign, he must be more than man, more than David's son: as man, so he was David's son; as God-man, so he was David's Lord. Note hence, 1. That although Christ was truly and really man, yet he was more than a bare man; he was Lord unto, and the salvation of, his own forefathers. Note, 2. That the only way to reconcile the scriptures which speak concerning Christ, is to believe and acknowledge him to be God and man in one person; his Messiah, as man, was to come forth out of David's loins; but as God-man, he was David's sovereign and Saviour: as man he was his father's son; as God, he was Lord to his own father.

38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and *love* salutations in the market-places, 39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: 40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Observe here, What it is that our Saviour condemns; not civil salutations in the market-place, not the chief seats in the synagogues, not the uppermost rooms at feasts, but their fond affecting of these things, and their ambitious aspiring after them. It was not their taking, but their loving the uppermost rooms at feasts, which Christ condemns. Observe, 2. How our Saviour condemns the Pharisees for their gross hypocrisy in colouring over their covetousness with a pretence of religion,

making long prayers in the temple and synagogues for widows, and thereupon persuading them to give bountifully to Corban; that is, the common treasury for the temple, some part of which was employed for their maintenance. Whence we learn, That it is no new thing for designing hypocrites to cover the foulest transgressions with the cloak of religion. The Pharisees made long prayers a cloak and cover for their covetousness.

41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. 42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. 43 And he called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: 44 For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

As our blessed Saviour sat over against the treasury, that is, that part of the court of the temple where the Corban, or chests for receiving the people's offerings and gifts, were set, he observed and took notice of those that offered their oblations; and some that were rich offered very liberally; but *a certain poor woman came and offered two mites*. Our Saviour hereupon takes occasion to instruct his disciples in this comfortable truth; namely, "That Almighty God accepts the will of those that give cheerfully, though they cannot give largely:" this poor woman cast in more in respect of the inward affection of her heart, and in proportion to her state, than all those that were rich and wealthy, that had cast in before her; a mite to her being more than a pound to them. From the whole note, 1. That the poorer, yea, the poorest sort of people, are not exempted from good works: even they must exercise charity according to their abilities. Learn, 2. That in all works of pious charity which we perform, God looks at the heart, the will and affection of the giver, more than at the largeness and liberality of the gift: *If there be a*

*willing mind*, says the apostle, 2 Cor. viii. 12. *it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*. 3. That a person ought sometimes to give what he cannot very well spare himself; and be ready to distribute not only to his power, but even above and beyond his power, 2 Cor. viii. 2, 3.

## CHAP. XIII.

AND as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here*! 2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Our blessed Saviour being now ready to depart from the temple; never more, after this, entering into it; and his disciples showing him with wonder and admiration the magnificent structures and buildings thereof, apprehending, that in regard of its invincible strength it could not be destroyed, or that at least in regard of its incredible magnificence it was great pity it should be destroyed; then say to Christ, *Master, behold what buildings are here!* not considering how sin will undermine and blow up the most famous structures. Sin brings cities and kingdoms, as well as particular persons, to their end; not one stone of this magnificent structure, says Christ, shall remain unpulled down: which threatening was exactly fulfilled after Christ's death, when Titus the Roman emperor destroyed the city, burnt the temple, and Turnus Rufus, the general of his army, ploughed up the very foundation on which the temple stood. Thus was the threatening of God fulfilled, Jer. xxvi. 11. *Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become an heap*. Learn hence, 1. That sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms. 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever appearing improbabilities there may be to the contrary. It is neither the temple's strength nor beauty that can oppose or withstand God's power.

3 And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, over against the temple, Peter and James and John and



Andrew asked him privately, 4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall* be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

A double question is here propounded to our Saviour by his disciples; namely, when the destruction of Jerusalem shall be? and what shall be the signs of that destruction? See here what an itching curiosity there is in the best of men to know futurities; to know things that shall come to pass hereafter; and when that hereafter is to come to pass. Oh! how happy were we, if as forward to obey the declarations of God's revealed will, as we are to pry into the hidden counsels of his secret will! *Tell us*, say the disciples, *when shall these things be.*

5 And Jesus answering them, began to say, Take heed lest any *man* deceive you: 6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and shall deceive many. 7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for *such things* must needs be; but the end *shall* not be yet. 8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be earthquakes in *divers* places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these *are* the beginnings of sorrows. 9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. 10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

Here and in the following verses our Saviour gives his disciples the signs which should forerun the destruction of Jerusalem. The first of which was this, that *there should arise false Christs, false prophets, and seducers*; such as Theudas, and others, under the name and person of the Messias, some affirming themselves to be Christ personal, or the promised Messiah; others to be Christ doctrinal, affirming their erroneous opinions to be the mind and doctrine of Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That as there will be many seducers before the end of

the world, (for Jerusalem's destruction was a type and emblem of the world's destruction,) and many will be seduced and misled by them; so it is the duty of Christ's own disciples to take heed, lest they being also led away by the error of the wicked, do fall from their own steadfastness. *Take heed*, says Christ, *that no man deceive you, for many will come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and will deceive many.* The second sign of Jerusalem's destruction was *wars and rumours of wars*; that is, civil broils, and intestine commotions among themselves; as also *famine and earthquake*. Whence note, That war and fire, earthquakes and famines, are judgments and calamities inflicted by God upon a sinful people for their contempt of Christ and gospel-grace. 2. That although these be very terrible judgments, and desolating calamities, yet to an incorrigible and irreclaimable people are they the forerunners of worse judgments. *These are*, says Christ, *the beginnings of sorrows.* The third sign of this approaching destruction, was a general persecution of the ministers of the gospel, for preaching the doctrines of the gospel to a lost world: *Ye shall be beaten, and brought before kings for my sake, for a testimony.* From whence note, That the preaching of the gospel, wherever it comes, will be for a testimony to them to whom it comes; either a testimony for them, or against them; to the humble it is a testimony for, to despisers and scorners it is a testimony against; if the dust of the ministers' feet bear witness against the despisers of the gospel, their sermons much more. The word of God delivered in the scriptures, and dispensed in the ministry thereof, hath its diverse and contrary effects upon different and contrary subjects; from both which yet Almighty God knows how to raise his own glory: to the humble and teachable, the gospel is in *adjutorium*, to the scorners and despisers it will be in *testimonium*: to some the savour of life unto life, to others the savour of death unto death.

11 But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. 12

Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against *their* parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my Name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Here our Saviour acquaints his disciples, that for preaching the gospel they should be brought before kings and rulers; but advises them, when they should be so brought, not to be anxiously thoughtful and solicitous what they should say; for it should be suggested to them by the Holy Ghost what to say in that hour. Note here, That this promise seems to be peculiar to the apostles, and that it belonged to them only, when they were brought before kings and rulers, to plead the cause of Christ. Learn hence, That though the truth of Christ may be opposed, yet the defenders of it shall never be ashamed; for rather than they shall want a tongue to plead for it, God himself will prompt them by his Holy Spirit, and suggest such arguments to them as all their enemies shall not be able to gain say. Observe farther, How our Saviour describes the bitter enmity of the world against the preachers of the gospel, to be such as would overcome and extinguish even the natural affection of the dearest relations one towards another. *The brother shall betray the brother to death.* Grace teaches us to lay down our lives for the brethren; but corruption in general, and enmity to the gospel in particular, teaches brother to take away the life of brother: *The brother shall betray the brother to death.* Observe lastly, How our Saviour comforts his disciples, that there would be an end of these their sharp and bitter sufferings; assuring them, that if their faith and patience did hold out *unto the end, they should be saved.* This is our comfort, our sufferings for Christ must be sharp, but they shall be short; if our sufferings for Christ end not in our lifetime, they will end with our lives.

14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,)

The sense is, "When ye shall see the

Roman army, which is an abomination to you, and an occasion of great desolation wherever it goes; when you shall see that abominable desolating army, begirting the city of Jerusalem, in order to her ruin and being laid waste, then call to mind the prophecy of Daniel, which primarily respected Antiochus, but secondarily Titus the Roman emperor, and shall now be fully completed: for the siege shall not be raised till both city and temple be razed to the ground." From whence learn, 1. That God has instruments ready at his call to lay waste the strongest cities, and to ruin the most flourishing kingdoms which do reject his Son, and refuse the tenders of his grace. 2. That God can, and sometimes doth, make use of those very persons whom sinners most abhor, to be the instruments of their punishment, and the occasions of their destruction. The Roman army, which was an abomination to the Jews, did God destroy them by.

—Then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: 15 And let him that is on the house-top not go down into the house, neither enter *therein*, to take any thing out of his house: 16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. 17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! 18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

The meaning is, "As soon as ye shall see the Roman army appear before the city of Jerusalem, let every one that values his own safety fly, as far and as fast as he can, as Lot fled from the flames of Sodom; and be glad if by flight he can save his life, though he lose goods and clothes, and all things besides." Whence learn, That when Almighty God is pouring forth his fury upon a sinful people, it is both lawful, and a necessary duty, by flight to endeavour to shelter and secure ourselves from the approaching calamity and desolation; When ye see *Jerusalem encompassed with armies, flee to the mountains.* 2. That in case of flight before an enraged enemy, and bloody army, if we lose all that we have, and our lives be given us for a prey, we fare well, and the Lord deals very graciously and mercifully with us. Next, our Saviour declares the doleful distress of those that could not flee from the Roman army

encompassing Jerusalem, as *women great with child, and others giving suck*, who by that means are like to lose their lives; and adds farther, that it would increase the calamity, if their *flight should happen to be in the winter*; or, as St. Matthew adds, *on the sabbath-day*, Matt. xxiv. 20. *Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the sabbath-day*. Flight in the winter is sad, because we can then fly neither fast nor far; and on the sabbath-day it is very sorrowful, that being the day of our spiritual labour, and of our bodily rest. Learn thence, That it is a great addition to the trouble and disquiet of a good man's spirit, when the day of his spiritual rest is interrupted; and instead of enjoying communion with God in his house, he is driven from house and home.

19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created, unto this time, neither shall be. 20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

The dreadful calamities which were coming upon the Jews in general, and Jerusalem in particular, are here foretold by our blessed Saviour, partly from the Roman army without, and partly from the seditions and factions of the zealots within; who committed such outrages and slaughters, that there were no less than an hundred thousand Jews slain, and ninety-seven thousand taken prisoners. They that bought our Saviour for thirty pence, were now themselves sold thirty for a penny. Now did the temple itself become a sacrifice, a whole burnt-offering, and was consumed to ashes. Yet observe, Christ promises that *those days of vengeance should be shortened for the elect's sake*. God had a remnant which he designed should survive that destruction, to be a holy seed: and accordingly the providence of God so ordered it, that the city was taken in six months, and the whole country depopulated in eighteen. From whence observe, How the Lord intermixes some mercy with the extremest misery that doth befall a people for their sin on this side hell. No sinners can say in this life, that they feel the strokes of justice to the utmost, or that they have judgment without mercy.

21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not; 22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

The Jews had all along cherished in themselves a vain expectation, that the promised Messias should be a temporal deliverer, and set them at liberty from the power and slavery of the Romans; and accordingly our Saviour declares to his disciples here, That, immediately before Jerusalem's destruction, several persons, taking the advantage of this expectation, would make themselves heads of parties, and pretend that they were the true Messiah, who should save and deliver them from their enemies, if they would follow them. Hereupon our Saviour cautions his disciples against such false Christs, and false prophets, and bids them not believe them, though they did never so many great signs and wonders, and promised them never such glorious deliverances. From hence note, 1. That the church's great danger is from seducers, that come in Christ's name, and pretend to work signs and wonders by his authority. Note, 2. That such is the power of seduction and delusion, that many, in all ages of the church, have been carried away with seducers and false teachers. 3. That the elect themselves, if left to themselves, might be seduced; but being guarded by divine power against seduction and delusion, they shall be preserved from that fatal mischief: *They shall seduce, if possible, even the elect*.

24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26 And then they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory. 27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

Our Saviour goes on in figurative expressions, to set forth the calamities that should

befall the Jewish nation immediately after Jerusalem's destruction. *The sun shall be darkened*: that is, all their glory and excellency shall be eclipsed, all their wealth and prosperity shall be laid waste, their whole government, civil and ecclesiastical, destroyed; and such marks of misery found upon them, as never was seen upon a people. Those that apply this to the general judgment understand the words literally, that the sun and moon will then have their influences suspended; that the holy angels will be sent forth *to gather the elect from all quarters of the world with the sound of a trumpet*, says St. Matthew. Probably, as there was an audible sound of a trumpet at the giving of the law, so there shall be the like sound of a trumpet when Christ shall summon the world to judgment for transgressing of that law. A joyful sound will this be to the friends of Christ; a doleful, dreadful sound, in the ears of his enemies.

28 Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, *even at the doors*. 30 Verily I say unto you, That this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. 32 But of that day and *that hour* knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Here our blessed Saviour declares two things with reference to his coming. 1. The certainty of the thing itself. 2. The uncertainty of the time. The certainty of his coming he sets forth by the similitude of the fig-tree, whose beginning to bud declares the summer at hand. Thus our Saviour tells them, that when they should see the fore-mentioned signs, they might conclude the destruction of their city and temple to be nigh at hand: and accordingly some then living did see their predictions fulfilled. Observe, 2. The uncertainty as to the precise time when this judgment should come: no angel in heaven, nor creature upon earth, could determine the time, only the glorious persons in the Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Learn hence, That all things are not revealed to the angels themselves, but such things only as it concerns them to know, and the wisdom of God thinks fit to reveal. 2. That the precise time of the day of judgment is kept by God as a secret to himself: we are not to know the hour, to the intent we may be on our watch every hour; Christ himself did not know it as man, but as God only. The knowledge and revelation of this was no part of Christ's prophetic office, it being one of those times and seasons which the Father has put in his own power, *Acts i. 7*. Consider Christ as God, or the second Person in the Trinity, and to affirm that there is any thing which he does not know, is blasphemy; but to consider him as the Messias, and to say that there were some things which Christ, as such, did not know, is no blasphemy. For though Christ as God was equal with the Father, yet as Messias, or God-man, he was inferior to the Father, his servant, or messenger, and could do nothing of himself, and did not know all things.

33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34 *For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey*, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35 Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Our blessed Saviour takes occasion from the foregoing doctrine of the certainty and suddenness of his coming to judgment, to enforce the duty of diligent and industrious watchfulness upon all his disciples and followers; that is, to be upon their guard against all sin, and to be in an actual readiness for his appearance and approach. Learn hence, That it is the indispensable duty, and ought to be the indefatigable endeavour, of every christian, to stand upon his guard in a prepared readiness for Christ's appearance, both for his coming to them, and for their going to him. There is a two-fold readiness for Christ's coming, namely, habitual and actual: an habitual readiness is a readiness of the state and condition; actual readiness is the readiness of the person: when we are

furnished with all the graces and virtues of a good life, when our lamps are burning, and our loins girded, our souls furnished with all the graces of God's Holy Spirit, our lives fruitful in good works : *Blessed is that servant, who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found thus watching.*

#### CHAP. XIV.

**A**FTER two days was *the feast of the passover*, and of unleavened bread : and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. 2 But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

This chapter gives us a sad and sorrowful account of the high priests' conspiracy against the life of our blessed Saviour; in which we have observable the persons that made this conspiracy, the manner of the conspiracy, and the time when this conspiracy was made. 1. The persons conspiring are the chief priests, scribes, and elders; that is, the whole Jewish sanhedrim, or general council. They lay their malicious heads together to contrive the destruction of the innocent Jesus. Thence learn, That general councils have erred, and may err fundamentally in matters of doctrine; so did this general council at Jerusalem, consisting of chief priests, doctors, and elders, with the high-priest their president, in not believing Jesus to be the Messiah, after all the miracles wrought before their eyes. Observe, 2. The manner of this conspiracy against our Saviour's life; it was clandestine, secret, and subtle: *they consult how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.* Thence note, That Satan makes use of the subtilty of crafty men, and abuseth their parts as well as their power, for his own purposes and designs; the devil sends no fools on his errands. Observe, 3. The circumstance of time when this conspiracy was managed: *at the feast of the passover*; it being a custom among the Jews to execute malefactors at their solemn feasts, as at the feasts of the passover, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles; at which times all the Jews came up to Jerusalem to sacrifice, and then they put malefactors to death, that all Israel might see and hear and not do so wickedly. Accordingly, this feast of the passover was waited for by the Jews as a fit opportunity to put our Saviour to death; the only objec-

tion was, that it might occasion a tumult amongst the people, there being such a mighty concourse at that time in Jerusalem. But Judas making them a proffer, they readily comply with the motion, and resolve to take the first opportunity to put our Saviour to death.

3 And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster-box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. 4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? 5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. 6 And Jesus said, Let her alone, why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. 7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. 8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. 9 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Several particulars are observable in this piece of history: As, first, the action which this holy woman performed: she pours a box of precious ointment upon our Saviour's head as he sat at meat, according to the custom of the eastern countries at their feasts. Murmuring Judas valued this ointment at three hundred pence, which makes of our money nine pounds, seven shillings, and sixpence, reckoning the Roman penny at sevenpence half-penny. I do not find that any of the apostles were at thus much cost and charge to put honour upon our Saviour, as this poor woman was. Learn hence, that where strong love prevails in the heart towards Christ, nothing is adjudged too dear for him, neither will it suffer itself to be outshined by any examples; the weakest woman that strongly loves our Saviour, will piously strive with the greatest apostle to express the fervour of her affection towards

him. Observe, 2. How this action was repented and reflected upon by Judas, and some other disciples whom he had influenced: *They had indignation within themselves, and said, To what purpose is this waste?* O how doth a covetous heart think every thing too good for Christ! Happy was it for this poor woman, that she had a more righteous Judge to pass sentence upon her action than murmuring Judas. Observe, 3. How readily our holy Lord vindicates this good woman: she says nothing for herself, nor need she, having so good an advocate. First, He rebukes Judas; *Let her alone, why trouble ye the women?* Next he justifies the action; *She hath wrought a good work*, because it flowed from a principle of love to Christ. And lastly, He gives the reason of her action; *She did it for my burial.* As kings and great persons were wont in those eastern countries, at their funerals, to be embalmed with odours and sweet perfumes; so, says our Saviour, this woman to declare her faith in me as her king and lord, doth with this box of ointment, as it were beforehand, embalm my body for its burial. True faith puts honour upon a crucified, as well as glorified, Saviour. This holy woman accounts Christ worthy of all honour in his death, believing it would be a sweet smelling sacrifice unto God, and the savour of life unto his people. Observe, 4. Our Saviour doth not only justify and defend the action of this poor woman, but magnifies and extols it, declaring that she should be rewarded for it with an honourable memorial in all ages of the church: *Whosoever this gospel is preached, this shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.* Note hence, The care which Christ takes to have the good deeds of his children not buried in the dust with them, but had in everlasting remembrance. Though sin causes men to rot above ground, and stink alive, and when they are dead, leaves an ignominy upon their graves, yet will the actions of the just smell sweet, and blossom in the dust.

10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. 11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Observe here, 1. The person betraying our blessed Redeemer; *Judas*: Judas a professor, Judas a preacher, Judas an apostle, and *one of the twelve*, whom Christ had chosen out of all the world to be his dearest friends, his family and household. Shall we wonder to find friends unfriendly or unfaithful to us, when our Saviour had a traitor in his own family? Observe, 2. The heinous nature of Judas's sin: *he betrayed Jesus*; Jesus his Maker, Jesus his Master. It is no strange or uncommon thing for the vilest of sins and most horrid impieties, to be acted by such persons as make the most eminent profession of holiness and religion. Observe, 3. What was the occasion that led Judas to the commission of this sin: it was his inordinate love of money. I do not find that Judas had any particular malice, spite, or ill-will, against our Saviour, but a base and unworthy spirit of covetousness possessed him, and this made him sell his Master. Covetousness is the root-sin. An eager and insatiable thirst after the world, is a parent of the most monstrous and unnatural sins; for which reason our Saviour doubles his caution, *Luke xii. 15. Take heed and beware of covetousness.* It shows us both the danger of the sin, and the great care we ought to take to preserve ourselves from it.

12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare, that thou mayest eat the passover? 13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. 14 And whosoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. 16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them, and they made ready the passover.

The time for the celebration of the

passover being now at hand, Christ sends two of his disciples to Jerusalem to prepare things necessary in order thereunto. And here we have observable, 1. An eminent proof of Christ's divine nature, in telling them all the particulars which they should meet with in the city, as *a man bearing a pitcher of water, &c.* 2. How readily the heart of this householder was disposed to receive our Saviour and his disciples, and to accommodate them with all things needful upon this occasion. Our blessed Saviour had not a lamb of his own, and peradventure no money wherewith to buy one, yet he finds as excellent accommodations in this poor man's house, as if he had dwelt in Ahab's ivory palace, and had the provision of Solomon's table. When Christ has a passover to celebrate, he will dispose the heart to a free reception of himself. The room which Christ will enter into must be *a large room, an upper room, a room furnished and prepared: a large room*, is an enlarged heart, enlarged with love and thankfulness; an *upper room*, is an heart exalted, not puffed up with pride, but lifted up by heavenly-mindedness; a *room furnished*, is a soul adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit; into such an heart, and only such, will Christ enter.

17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. 18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. 19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, *Is it I?* and another said, *Is it I?* 20 And he answered and said unto them, *It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.* 21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

Observe here, 1. The unexampled boldness of this impudent traitor Judas; he presumed as soon as he had sold his Master, to sit down at the table with him, and did eat the passover with his disciples. Had the presence of Judas polluted this ordinance to any but himself, doubtless our Saviour would never have suffered him to approach unto it. But hence we learn, 1. That nothing

is more ordinary than for unholy persons to press in unto the holy ordinances of God, which they have no right, while such, to partake of. 2. That the presence of such persons doth pollute the ordinance only to themselves: holy persons are not polluted by their sins, therefore ought not to be discouraged from coming by their presence there. Observe, 2. What a surprising and astonishing word it was which dropt from our Saviour's mouth amongst his disciples: *One shall betray me: yea, one of you shall betray me.* Can any church upon earth expect purity in all its members, when Christ's own family of twelve had a traitor and a devil in it? Yet though it was very sad to hear of one, it was matter of joy to understand that there was but one. One hypocrite in the congregation is too much, but there is cause of rejoicing if there be no more. Observe, 3. Christ did not name Judas and say, "Thou, O perfidious Judas, art the traitor," but, *One of you shall betray me.* Doubtless it was to draw him to repentance, and to prevent the giving him any provocation. Lord, how sad is it for any of thy family, who pretend friendship to thee, to conspire with thine enemies against thee! for any *that eat of thy bread to lift up their heel against thee!* Observe, 4. The disciples' sorrow upon these words of Christ, and the effect of that sorrow. Their sorrow was (as well it might be) exceeding great: well might the innocent disciples be overwhelmed with sorrow, to hear that their Master should die, that he should die by treason, that the traitor should be one of themselves. But though their sorrow was great, yet was the effect of their sorrow very good, it wrought in them an holy suspicion of themselves, and caused every one to search himself, and say, *Master, is it I?* Learn hence, That it is possible for such secret wickedness to lodge in the heart we never suspected, till time and temptation draw it forth. None of the disciples suspected, nay, Judas himself never apprehended, that depth of iniquity and hypocrisy which was found lodging in him. Yet note. That though the disciples were jealous and suspicious, yet was it of themselves, not of one another; nay, not of Judas himself: every one said, *Master, is it I? not Master, is it Judas?* True sincerity and christian charity will make us more suspicious of ourselves than of any other; it hopes the best of others, and fears the worst of ourselves. Observe, 5. That though Judas sees himself pointed at by

our Saviour, and hears the dreadful threatenings denounced against him, *that it had been better for him that he had never been born*, yet he is no more blanked than innocence itself. Resolute sinners run on desperately in their evil courses, and with open eyes see and meet their own destruction, without being either dismayed at it, or concerned about it. This shameless man had the impudence to say to our blessed Saviour, *Master, is it I?* Our Saviour gives him a direct answer, *Thou sayest it*. Did not Judas (think we) blush extremely, cast down his guilty eyes, and let fall his drooping head, at so galling an intimation? Nothing less; we read of nothing like it. Lord, how does obduracy in sin steel the brow, and make it incapable of all relenting impressions! Observe lastly, How our Saviour prefers nonentity before damnation: *It had been better for that man if he had never been born*. A temporal, miserable being, is not worse than no being; but eternal misery is much worse than nonentity: better to have no being than not to have a being in Christ. It had been better for Judas that he had never been born, than to lie under everlasting wrath.

22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 23 And he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. 24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many. 25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. 26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.

Immediately after the celebration of the passover, our Lord institutes his holy supper; in which institution we have observable, the Author, the time, the elements, and ministerial actions. Observe here, 1. The Author of this new sacrament: *Jesus took bread*. Note thence, That to institute a sacrament is the sole prerogative of Jesus Christ. The church has no power to make new sacraments: it is only her duty to celebrate those which our Saviour has made.

Observe, 2. The time of the institution: the night before his passion; *The night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took bread*. Learn thence, That it is very necessary, when sufferings are approaching, to have recourse to the table of the Lord, which affords both an antidote against fear, and is a restorative to our faith. Observe, 3. The sacramental elements: *bread and wine*; bread representing the body, and wine the blood, of our dear Redeemer. Observe, 4. The ministerial actions: *the breaking of the bread, and the blessing of the cup*. As to the bread, *Jesus took it*; that is, set it apart from common use, and separated it for holy ends and purposes. He *blessed it*; that is, prayed for a blessing upon it: and *brake it*; thereby shadowing forth his body broken upon the cross: and he *gave it to his disciples, saying*, This broken bread signifies my body, suddenly to be broken upon the cross, for the redemption and salvation of a lost world; *Do this in remembrance of my death*. As to the cup, Christ having set it apart by prayer and thanksgiving, he commands his disciples to *drink all of it*; and accordingly they *all drank of it*, says this evangelist: and our Saviour gives his reason for it, ver. 24. *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for the remission of sins*; that is, the wine in this cup represents the shedding of my blood, by which this new covenant between God and man is ratified and confirmed. Whence we gather, That every communicant hath as undoubted a right to the cup as to bread, in the Lord's supper: *Drink ye all of this*, says Christ: therefore to deny the cup to the common people is sacrilege, and directly contrary to our Saviour's institution. And Christ calling the cup *the fruit of the vine*, affords a strong argument against the doctrine of transubstantiation: thus, "That which after consecration remains the fruit of the vine, is not substantially changed into the blood of Christ. But Christ called the wine in the cup the fruit of the vine after consecration: therefore that which Christ gave the apostles to drink, was not substantially changed into his blood. Wine is metaphorically called the blood of the grape; why may it not, by a like metaphor, be styled the blood of Christ?" After the celebration was over, our Saviour and his disciples sung an hymn, as the Jews were wont to do at the passover the six eucharistical Psalms, from the 113th to the 119th



Psalm. From Christ's example we may gather, how suitable it is to sing a psalm after the celebration of the Lord's Supper; how fit it is that God be glorified in his church by singing of psalms; and in particular when the Lord's Supper is celebrated! *When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet *will* not I. 30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. 31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

Observe here, 1. The warning that our Saviour gives his disciples of their forsaking of him in the time of his sufferings: *All ye shall be offended because of me this night.* Learn, That Christ's dearest friends forsook and left him alone in the midst of his greatest distress and danger. Observe, 2. What was the cause of their flight; it was their fear; the weakness of their faith, and the prevalency of their fear. O how sad and dangerous is it for the best of men to be left under the power of their own fears in the day of temptation! Observe, 3. Notwithstanding our Saviour's prediction, St. Peter's presumption of his own strength and standing; *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.* Learn thence, That self-confidence, and a presumptuous opinion of their own strength, is a sin very incident to the holiest and best of men. This good man resolved honestly, no doubt; but too, too much in his own strength. Little did he think what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if once left to the power and prevalency of his own fears. None are so near falling, as those who are most confident of their own standing; if ever we stand in the day of trial, it is the fear of falling that must enable us to stand.

32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and

he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. 33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. 35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. 37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? 38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. 39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. 40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy: neither wist they what to answer him. 41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: it is enough, the hour is come: behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

Our blessed Saviour being now come with his disciples into the garden, he falls there into a bitter and bloody agony, in which he prayed with wonderful fervency and importunity to his heavenly Father; his sufferings were now coming on a great pace, and he meets them upon his knees, and would be found in a praying posture. Learn thence, That prayer is the best preparative for, as well as the most powerful support under, the heaviest sufferings that can befall us. As to the prayer of our Saviour in the garden, many things are very observable; as, first, the place where he prayed, *the garden.* But why went Christ thither? Not, with our first parents, to hide himself there amongst the trees of the garden, from the notice and observation of his enemies: but as a garden was

the place where our misery began, as the first scene of human sin and misery was acted in a garden, so does our Lord choose a garden for the fittest place for his agony and satisfactory pains to begin in. Again, this garden was a place of privacy and retirement, where our Lord might best attend the offices of devotion preparatory to his passion. St. John xviii. 2. tells us, *That Jesus oft-times resorted to this garden with his disciples, and that Judas well knew the place.* It is evident then that Christ went not into the garden to shun his sufferings, but to prepare himself by prayer to meet his enemies. Observe, 2. The time when he entered into the garden for prayer: it was in the evening before he suffered; here he spent some hours in pouring forth his soul to God; for about midnight Judas, with his black guard, came and apprehended him in a praying posture. Our Lord teaching us by his example, that when imminent dangers are before us, especially when death is apprehended by us, to be very much in prayer to God, and very fervent in our wrestlings with him. Observe, 3. The matter of our Lord's prayer; *that if possible the cup might pass from him*: and he might be kept from the hour of suffering, that his soul might escape that dreadful wrath at which he was so sore amazed. "But what! Did Christ then begin to repent of his undertaking for sinners? Did he shrink and give back when it came to the pinch?" No, nothing less; but as he had two natures, being God and man, so he had two distinct wills: as man, he feared and shunned death; as God-man, he willingly submitted to it. The divine nature, and the human spirit of Christ, did now assault each other with disagreeing interests. Again, this prayer was not absolute, but conditional, *If it be possible, Father, if it may be*; if thou art willing, if it please thee, *let this cup pass*; if not, *I will drink it.* The cup of sufferings we see is a very bitter and distasteful cup; a cup which human nature abhors, and cannot desire, but pray against; yet God doth put this bitter cup of affliction into the hands oft-times of those whom he doth sincerely love; and when he doth so, it is their duty to drink it with silence and submission, as here this Lord did before them; *Father, let the cup pass; yet not my will, but thine be done.* Observe, 4. The manner of our Lord's prayer in the garden: and here we

may remark, 1. It was a solitary prayer, he went by himself *alone*, out of the hearing of his disciples. The company of our best and dearest friends is not always seasonable; there is a time to be solitary as well as to be sociable; there are times and cases when a christian would not be willing that the most intimate friend he has in the world should be with him, to hear what passes in secret between him and his God. 2. It was an humble prayer, that is evident by the postures into which he cast himself; sometimes kneeling, sometimes lying prostrate upon his face; he lies in the very dust, and lower he cannot lie; and his heart was as low as his body. 3. It was a vehement, fervent, and most importunate prayer: such was the fervour of our Lord's spirit, that he prayed himself into an agony. O let us blush to think how unlike we are to Christ in prayer, as to our praying frame of spirit. Lord! what deadness and drowsiness, what stupidity and formality, what dulness and laziness, is found in our prayers! how often do our lips move, when our hearts stand still: 4. It was a reiterated and repeated prayer; he prayed the first, second, and third time, *for the passing of the cup from him*; he returns upon God over and over again, resolving to take no denial. Let us not be discouraged, though we have sought God often for a particular mercy, and yet no answer has been given in unto us. Our prayers may be answered, though their answer for the present is suspended. A prayer put up in faith, according to the will of God, though it may be delayed, it shall not be lost. Our Saviour prayed the first, second, and third time, for the passing of the cup; and although he was not heard as to exemption from suffering, yet he was heard as to support under suffering. Observe, 5. The posture the disciples were found in when our Lord was in this agony, praying to his Father: *they were fast asleep.* Good God! could they possibly sleep at such a time as that was? When Christ's soul was exceeding sorrowful, could their eyes be thus heavy? Learn thence, That the best of Christ's disciples may be, and oft-times are, overtaken with infirmities, with great infirmities, when the most important duties are performing; *He cometh to his disciples, and finds them sleeping.* Observe, 6. The mild and gentle reproof which he gives his disciples for their sleeping: *Could ye not watch with me one hour?* Could ye not watch when

your Master was in such danger? Could ye not watch with me, when I am going to deliver up my life for you? What, not one hour; and that the parting hour too? After his reprehension he subjoins an exhortation; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*; and superadds a forcible reason, *For though the spirit be willing, yet the flesh is weak*. Thence learn, That the holiest and best resolved christians, who have willing spirits for Christ and his service, yet in regard of the weakness of the flesh, or frailty of human nature, it is their duty to watch and pray, and thereby guard themselves against temptation; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; for though the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak*.

43 And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: take him, and lead him away safely. 45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. 46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him. 47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? 49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. 50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

The hour is now almost come, even the hour of sorrow which Christ had so often spoken of: *Yet a little while, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners; for while he yet spake, cometh Judas with a band of soldiers to apprehend him*. It was the lot and portion of our dear Redeemer, to be betrayed into the hands of his mortal enemies by the treachery of a false and dissembling friend. Here we have observable, 1. The traitor.

2. The treason. 3. The manner how. 4. The time when this treasonable design was executed. Observe, 1. The traitor: *Judas*. All the evangelists carefully describe him by his name, *Judas*; by his surname, *Judas Iscariot*; lest he should be mistaken for Jude, the brother of James. Almighty God takes great care to preserve the names of his upright-hearted servants. He is farther described by his office, *One of the twelve*. The eminency of his place and station was an high aggravation of his transgression. Learn hence, That the greatest professors had need be very jealous of themselves, and suspicious of their own hearts, and look well to the grounds and principles of their profession; for a profession begun in hypocrisy will certainly end in apostasy. Learn farther, That persons are never in such imminent danger, as when they meet with temptations exactly suited to their master-lusts. Covetousness was Judas's master-sin; the love of the world made him a slave to Satan, and the devil lays a temptation before him exactly suited to his temper and inclination; and it constantly overcomes him. O! pray we, that we may be kept from a strong and suitable temptation; a temptation suited to our inclination and predominant lust and corruption. Observe, 2. The treason of this traitor Judas: he led on an armed multitude to the place where Christ was, gave them a signal to discover him by, and bids them lay hands upon him, and *hold him fast*. Some conjecture, that when Judas bade them hold Christ fast, he thought they could not do it; but that as Christ had at other times conveyed himself from the multitude, when they attempted to kill or stone him, so he would have done now: but his hour was now come, and accordingly he suffers himself to be delivered by the treachery of Judas into his enemies' hands. And this his treason is attended with these hellish aggravations; he had been a witness to the miracles which our Saviour had wrought by his divine power, and therefore could not sin out of ignorance: what he did was not at the solicitation and persuasion of others, but he was a volunteer in this service; the high priests did not send to him, but he went to them, offering his assistance: no doubt it was a matter of surprise to the chief priests to find one of Christ's own disciples at the head of a conspiracy against him. Lord! how dangerous is it to show ourselves in any one secret or open sin!

none can say how far that one sin may in time lead us. Should any have told Judas, that his love of money would at last make him sell his Saviour, he would have said with Hazael, *Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?* That soul can never be safe that harbours one sin within its breast. Observe, 3. The manner how this hellish plot was executed; partly by force, and partly by fraud: by force, in that Judas came with a multitude armed with *swords and staves*; and by fraud, *giving a kiss*, and saying, *Hail, Master*. Here was honey in the lips, but poison in the heart. Observe, 4. The time when, the place where, and the work which our Saviour was about, when this treasonable design was executed: he was in the garden with his disciples, exhorting them to prayer and watchfulness, dropping heavenly advice and comfort upon them. While he yet spake, *lo! Judas came*. Our Saviour was found in the most heavenly and excellent employment when his enemies came to apprehend him. Lord, how happy is it when our sufferings find us in God's way, engaged in his work, and engaging his assistance by fervent supplication! Thus did our Lord's sufferings meet him: may ours in like manner meet us! Observe, 5. The endeavours used by the disciples for their Master's rescue; one of them (Saint Matthew says it was Peter) draws his sword, and cuts off the ear of Malchus, who probably was one of the forwardest to lay hands on Christ. But why did not Saint Peter draw upon Judas rather than Malchus? Because, though Judas was more faulty, yet Malchus was more forward to arrest and carry off our Saviour. How doth a pious breast swell with indignation at the sight of any open affront offered to its Saviour! Yet though St. Peter's heart was sincere, his hand was rash; good intentions are no warrant for irregular actions; and accordingly Christ, who accepted the affection, reproves the action: *Put up thy sword; for they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword*. Christ will thank no man to fight for him without warrant and commission from him. To resist a lawful magistrate to Christ's own defence, is rash zeal, and countenanced by the gospel. Observe, 6. The effect which our Saviour's apprehension had upon the disciples; they *all forsook him, and fled*. They that said Christ a little before, *Though we should die with thee, yet will we not*

*deny thee*; do all here desert, and cowardly forsake him, when it came to the trial. Learn hence, That the best and holiest of men know not their own hearts, when great temptations and trials are before them, until such time as they come to grapple with them. No man knows his own strength till temptation puts it to the proof.

51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about *his naked body*; and the young men laid hold on him: 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked. 53 And they led Jesus away to the high-priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. 54 And Peter followed him afar off, even unto the palace of the high-priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. 55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. 57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59 But neither so did their witness agree together. 60 And the high-priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it which* these witness against thee? 61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high-priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? 64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And

they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Here we have the history of our Saviour's examination before the high-priest and council, who set up all night to arraign and try the holy and innocent Jesus; for, lest his death should look like a downright murder, they allow him a mock-trial, and abuse the law by perverting it to injustice and bloodshed. Accordingly false witnesses are suborned, who depose that they heard him say, *he would destroy the temple, and build it again in three days.* It is not in the power of the greatest innocence to protect the most innocent and holy person from slander and false accusation; yea, no person is so innocent and good, whom false witness may not condemn. Observe, 2. Our Lord's meekness and patience, his silence under all these wicked suggestions and false accusations: *Jesus held his peace, and answered nothing,* ver. 61. Guilt is naturally clamorous and impatient; but innocence is silent, and careless of misreports. Learn hence, That to bear the revilings, contradictions, and false accusations, of men with a silent and submissive spirit, is an excellent and Christ-like temper. Our Lord stood before his unjust judge, and false accusers even as a sheep before the shearer, dumb, and not opening his mouth; even then when a trial for his life was managed most maliciously and illegally against him: *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.* May the same humble mind and forgiving spirit be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus! Observe, 3. That although our Saviour was silent, and made no reply to the false witnesses; yet now, when the question was solemnly put by the high-priest, *Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* *He answered, I am.* Thence learn, That although we are not obliged by every ensnaring question to make answer, yet we are bound faithfully to own, and freely to confess, the truth, when solemnly called thereunto: when our silence will be interpreted a denial of the truth, a dishonour to God, a reproach and scandal to our brethren, it will be a great sin to hold our peace; and we must not be silent, though our confession

of the truth hazards our liberty, yea, our life. Christ knew that his answer would cost him his life, yet he durst not but give it: *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* *Jesus said, I am.* Observe, 4. The crime which the high-priest pronounces our Saviour to be guilty of, that of blasphemy; *He hath spoken blasphemy.* Hereupon the high-priest rends his clothes: it being usual with the Jews so to do, both to show their sorrow for it, and great detestation of it, and indignation against it. Observe, 5. The vile affronts and horrid abuses which the enemies of our Saviour put upon him, they *spit in his face, they blindfold him, they smite him with their hands,* and in contempt and mockery *bid him prophesy who it was that smote him.* Verily there is no degree of contempt, no mark of shame, no kind of suffering, which we ought to decline, or stick at for Christ's sake, who hid not his face from shame and spitting upon our account. Observe, 6. The high-priest rends his clothes at Christ's telling him, ver. 62. *Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on God's right hand, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* And well might his clothes and his heart rend also. It was as if our Lord had said, "I that am now your prisoner, shall shortly be your judge. I now stand at your bar; and, ere long, you must stand at my tribunal. Those eyes of yours that now see me in the form of a servant, shall behold me in the clouds, at the right hand of your God, and my Father."

66 And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high-priest: 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. 69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. 70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71 But he began to curse and to fear,

saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. 72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

This last paragraph of the chapter gives us an account of the fall and rising of Peter; of his sin in denying Christ, and of his recovery by repentance. Both are considered distinctly in the notes of *St. Matt.* xxvi. 69. that which is here farther to be taken notice of, is as followeth. Observe, 1. That amongst all the apostles and disciples of Christ, we meet not with any so extraordinary, either for faith or obedience, as St. Peter. He was an early professor, *St. Matt.* iv. 18. and a glorious confessor, *St. Matt.* xvi. 16. *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Which confession of his faith, like a rock, was to be the foundation of the gospel church in all ages; and Christ was pleased to put that honour upon Peter, as to use his ministry, in first laying the foundation of a christian church among the Jews and Gentiles, he being the first preacher to them of that faith which he did here confess. To the Jews, *Acts* ii. where we read of three thousand souls converted and baptized; and to the Gentiles, *Acts* x. in the conversion of Cornelius and his friends, whom God directed to send, not to Jerusalem for James, nor to Damascus for St. Paul, but to Joppa for Peter; whom Christ had appointed for that work, that he might tell him words by which he and his household should be saved. Observe, 2. The great and mighty courage which was found in St. Peter. 1. At the command of Christ he adventures to walk on the waves of the sea, *Matt.* xiv. 28. being firmly persuaded, that whatsoever Christ commanded his disciples to do, he would give them strength and ability to perform. And, 2. It was a noble courage which enabled him to say, *Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.* No doubt the good man really resolved to do as he said, little suspecting that he should, with horrid oaths and bitter imprecations, deny and abjure his dying Master. "Lord! how prone are we to think our hearts better than they are! our grace stronger than it is! Not all the instances we have of human frailty in ourselves, or all the scars, marks, and wounds,

upon some of the best and holiest of men; by reason of their sad and shameful falls, will sufficiently convince us of our wretched impotency, and how unable we are to do good or resist evil, by our own shattered and impaired strength." 3. An undaunted courage, and heroic greatness of mind, appeared in this apostle, when he told the Jews to their faces that they were guilty of murder, and must never expect salvation any other way, than by faith in that Jesus whom they had ignominiously crucified, and unjustly slain. Nor did St. Peter say this in a corner, or behind the curtain, but in the sanhedrim, that open court of judicature, which had so lately sentenced and condemned his Lord and Master. Observe, 3. St. Peter's profound humility and lowliness of mind: it was a mighty honour that Christ put upon him in making use of his ministry, for laying the foundation of a christian church, both among Jews and Gentiles. And, accordingly, Cornelius, *Acts* x. would have entertained him with expressions of more than ordinary honour and veneration, falling down at his feet, and ready to adore him; but this humble apostle was so far from complying with it, that he plainly told him that he was no other than such a man as himself. And when our Lord, by a stupendous act of condescension, stooped so low as to wash his disciple's feet, St. Peter could by no means be persuaded to admit of it, neither could be induced personally to accept it, till Christ was in a sort forced to threaten him into obedience, and a compliance with it, *St. John* xiii. 8. Observe, How admirable was his love unto, and how burning his zeal for, his Lord and Master, insomuch that he could and did appeal to his omniscieny for the truth and sincerity of it; *Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.* It was love that caused him to draw his sword in his Master's defence against a band of soldiers, and an armed multitude. It was love that caused him to adventure on the greatest difficulties, and to expose his life to the greatest hazards. It was love that caused him to engage so deep, as to suffer and die, rather than deny him. These were his exemplary virtues. His failings were these: First, too great a confidence of his own strength, notwithstanding Christ had particularly told him that Satan had desired to winnow him as wheat. None are so likely to be overcome by a temptation, as those who are least afraid of it; none so ready to fall, as those that think it impossible to fall. It is a dan-

gerous thing to believe, that because we have long kept our innocence, we can never lose it; and to conclude, because we have been once or twice victorious over temptations, we must be ever conquerors, 1 Cor. x. 12. *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*; that is, let him keep a jealous eye upon the weakness and inconstancy of his nature, and with a believing eye look up to the power and promise of God, that he may be preserved from falling, and presented faultless in the day of Christ. Secondly, His fears overcame his faith. The insolent affronts offered to his injured Master caused him to forget his former resolutions, and instead of being a valiant confessor, he turns a shameful renegade, renouncing him for whom a little before he resolved to die. Learn hence, That slavish fear is a most tumultuous and ungovernable passion; its powerful assaults not only vanquish the strongest reason, but sometimes overcome the strongest faith. It is a weapon which the tempter uses, to the discomfort of some, and destruction of others, and therefore ought to be guarded against by those who set any value on the peace and comfort of their souls. Thirdly, One sin drew on another; his sinful equivocation in saying, *I know not the man*, prepared him for a downright denial, and that for an abjuration of him, with an imprecation and an anathema, swearing that he knew not the man. "Ah Peter! is this thy owning thy Lord? Is this thy not being offended, though all should be offended? Is this thy dying with him, rather than deny him? What! hast thou forgot all thy promises and engagements to him, and all the dear and sweet pledges of his love, so lately shown to thee? Surely I have learnt from thy example, that it is as dangerous to trust an heart of flesh, as to rely upon an arm of flesh; for had not thy denied and forsaken Master prayed for thee, and timely succoured thee, Satan would not only have winnowed thee like wheat, but ground thee to powder." Fourthly, Observe how many complicated sins were included in this sin of Peter's. The highest ingratitude to his Master; unpardonable rashness, in venturing into such company, tarrying there so long, and without a call; making bold with a temptation; and for a time there was impenitence and hardness of heart. It is holy and safe to resist the beginnings of sin; if we yield to Satan in one temptation, he will certainly assault us with more and stronger. Peter proceeded here from a denial to a lie, from a lie to an

oath, from an oath to a curse. Let us resist sin at first: for then have we most power, and sin has least. *And the Lord looked on Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, and went out, and wept bitterly.* Observe, If Christ had not looked towards Peter, Peter would never more have looked after Christ; nor was it barely the turn of Christ's bodily eye that wrought this disciple to a sorrowful remembrance of his sin; had not this outward look been accompanied with the inward and secret influences of his Spirit, it had certainly proved ineffectual. Christ looked on Judas after his treason; aye, and reproved him too: but neither that look nor that reproof did break his heart. As the sun with the same beams softens wax and hardens clay, so a look from the same Christ leaves Judas hard and impenitent, and melts down Peter into tears. Though none can say, that tears are always a sign of true repentance, yet certainly when they flow from a heart duly sensible of sin, and deeply affected with sorrow, it administers matter of hope that there is sincere repentance. Peter, after he had wept bitterly for sin, never more returned to the after-commission of sin; but he that was before timorous as an hare, became afterward bold as a lion. He that once so shamefully denied, nay, abjured, his Master, afterwards openly confessed him, and sealed that confession joyfully with his blood. It is usually observed, that a broken bone once well set, never more breaks again in the same place; a returning backslider, when once restored, contracts such an hatred of former sins, as never, never more to run into the commission of them. Let St. Peter's fall then be a warning to all professors against presumptuous confidence, and his restoration be an encouragement to all backsliders to renew their faith and repentance, Amen.

#### CHAP. XV.

**A**ND straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of Judas's treason, in delivering our Saviour into the hands of the chief priests. In this chapter we find our holy Lord brought by the chief priests unto Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, in order to his condemna-

tion. Whence observe, That it has been the old policy of corrupt church-governors to abuse the power of the civil magistrate, in executing their cruel and unjust censures and sentences upon holy and innocent persons. The chief priests and elders do not kill our Saviour themselves, for it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, being themselves under the power of the Roman government; accordingly they deliver Christ over to the secular power, and desire Pilate, the civil magistrate, to sentence and condemn him.

2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the king of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. 3 And the chief priests accused him of many things; but he answered nothing. 4 And Pilate answered him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. 5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

It is very observable how readily our Saviour answers before Pilate: Pilate said, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* Jesus answered, *Thou sayest it*; or, it is as thou sayest. But to all the accusations of the chief priests, and to all that they falsely laid to his charge before Pilate, our Saviour answered never a word. He answered Pilate, but would not answer the chief priests a word before Pilate; probably for these reasons, because his innocence was such as needed no apology; because their calumnies and accusations were so notoriously false, that they needed no confutation; to show his contempt of death, and to teach us by his example, to despise the false accusations of malicious men, and to learn us patience and submission, when for his sake we are slandered and traduced; for these reasons our Saviour was as a deaf man, not answering the calumnies of the chief priests: but when Pilate asks him a question, which our Saviour knew that a direct answer to would cost him his life, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* he replies, *I am*. Hence, says the apostle, 1. Tim. vi. 13. that *Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession*. Teaching us, That although we may, and sometimes ought, to hold our peace, when our own reputa-

tion is concerned, yet must we never be silent when the honour of God and his truth may effectually be promoted by a free and full confession: *For, says Christ, whosoever denies me before men, him will I deny in the presence of my Father, and before all his holy angels.*

6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7 And there was one, named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8 And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. 11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. 12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? 13 And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. 15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

Now at the feast, that is, at the feast of the passover, which by way of eminency is called the feast, the governor used to release a prisoner; possibly by way of memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt: accordingly Pilate makes a motion that Christ may be the prisoner set at liberty in honour of their feast; for he was sensible that what they did was out of envy and malice. Observe here, 1. What were the sins which immediately occasioned the death of Christ: they were covetousness and envy. Covetousness caused Judas to sell him to the chief priests, and envy caused the chief priests to deliver him up to Pilate to crucify him. Envy is a killing and murdering passion;



*Envy slayeth the silly one*, Job v. 2. That is, it slayeth the silly person who harbours this pestilent lust in his breast and bosom; being like a fire in his bones, continually preying upon his spirits; and it is also the occasion of slaying many an holy and innocent person; for who can stand before envy? The person envying wishes the envied out of the way, yea out of the world; and, if need be, will not only wish it, but lend a lift upon occasion towards it also. Witness the chief priests here, whose envy was so conspicuous and barefaced, that Pilate himself takes notice of it; he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. Observe, 2. How unwilling, how very unwilling, Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death. One while he expostulates with the chief priests, saying, *What evil hath he done?* Another while he bids them, *Take him and judge him according to their law*. Nay, St. Luke says, that Pilate came forth three several times, professing, *that he found no fault in him*, Luke xxiii. From hence, note, That hypocrites within the visible church may be guilty of such tremendous acts of wickedness, as the consciences of infidels and pagans without the church may boggle at, and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews, that heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, do condemn him. Observe, lastly, How Pilate suffers himself to be overcome with the Jews' importunity, and, contrary to the light of his own reason and judgment, delivers the holy and innocent Jesus, first to be scourged, and then crucified. It is a vain apology for sin, when persons pretend that it was not committed with their own consent, but at the instigation and importunity of others; such is the frame and constitution of man's soul, that none can make him either wicked or miserable without his own consent. Pilate, willing to content the people *when he had scourged Jesus, delivered him up to be crucified*. Here observe, That as the death of the cross was a Roman punishment, so it was the manner of the Romans first to whip their malefactors and then crucify them. Now the manner of the Roman scourging is said to be thus: "They stripped the condemned person, and bound him to a post; two strong men first scourged him with rods of thorns, then two others scourged him with whips of cords full of knots, and last of all two more with whips of wire, and therewith tore off

the very flesh and skin from the malefactor's back and sides." That our blessed Saviour was thus cruelly scourged by Pilate's command, seems to some not improvable, from that of the Psalmist, *Psalm cxxix. 3. The ploughers ploughed upon my back, and made long furrows*: which, if spoken prophetically of Christ, was literally fulfilled in the day of his scourging. But why was the precious and tender body of our holy Lord thus galled, rent, and torn with scourging? Doubtless to fulfil that prophecy, *Isa. l. 6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: that by his stripes we might be healed*; and from his example learn, not to think it strange if we find ourselves scourged with the tongue, with the hand, or with both, when we see our dear Redeemer bleeding by stripes and scourges before our eyes.

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall called Pretorium; and they call together the whole band. 17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head; 18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and, bowing their knees, worshipped him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

The next part of our Saviour's sufferings consisted of cruel mockings: he had owned himself to be the King of the Jews; that is, a spiritual king in and over the church: but the Jews expecting that the Messiah should have appeared in the pomp of an earthly prince, and finding themselves disappointed of their expectation in our Saviour, they look upon him as a deceiver and impostor; and accordingly treat him as a mock-king, with all the marks of derision and scorn; for, first, they put a crown upon his head, but a very ignominious and painful one, a *crown of thorns*; they place a sceptre in his hand, but that of a *reed*; a *robe of scarlet or purple* upon his body; and then *bowed their knees before him*, as they were wont to do before their princes, crying, *Hail, king*. Thus were all the marks of scorn imaginable

put upon our dear Redeemer; yet what they did in jest, God permitted to be done in earnest. For all these things were signs and marks of sovereignty; and Almighty God caused the regal dignity of his Son to shine forth, even in the midst of his greatest abasement. Whence was all this jeering and sport, but to flout majesty? And why did Christ undergo all this ignominy, disgrace, and shame, but to show what was due unto us for our sins? As also to give us an example to bear all the scorn, reproach, and shame imaginable, for his sake, *who, for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame as well as endured the cross.*

21 And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. 22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a scull. 23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. 24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. 25 And it was the third hour; and they crucified him. 26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. 28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. 29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross. 31 Likewise also the chief priests, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. 32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him. 33 And when the sixth

hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it; said, Behold, he calleth Elias. 36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone: let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. 37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

The sentence of death being passed by Pilate, who can, with dry eyes, behold the sad pomp of our Saviour's bloody execution! Forth comes the blessed Jesus out of Pilate's gate, bearing that cross which soon after was to bear him; with his cross on his shoulder he marches towards Golgotha; and when they see he can go no faster, they force Simon the Cyrenian, not out of compassion, but indignation, to be the porter of his cross. The Cyrenian being a Gentile, not a Jew, that bare our Saviour's cross, thereby might be signified that the Gentiles should have a part in Christ as well as the Jews, and be sharers with them in the benefits of the cross. At length our holy Lord comes to Golgotha, the place of his bitter and bloody execution; here in a public place, with infamous company, betwixt two thieves, is he crucified; that is, fastened to a great cross of wood, his hands stretched forth abroad, and his feet closed together, and both hands and feet fastened with nails; his naked body was lifted up in the open air, hanging betwixt heaven and earth; signifying thereby, that the crucified person deserved to live in neither. This shameful, painful, and accursed death did the holy and innocent Jesus suffer and undergo for shameless sinners. Some observe all the dimensions of length, breadth, depth, and height, in our Saviour's sufferings; for length, his passion was several hours long, from twelve to three, exposed all that time both to hunger and cold. The thieves that were crucified with him endured only personal pains, but he underwent the miseries of all mankind. As to its breadth, his passion extended over all the powers

and parts of his soul and body ; no part free but his tongue, which was at liberty to pray for his enemies. His sight was tormented with the scornful gestures of those *who passed by wagging their heads* ; his hearing grieved with the taunts and jeers of the priests and people ; his smelling offended with noisome savours in the Place of Sculls ; his taste with the gall and vinegar given him to drink ; his feeling was wonderfully affected by the nails which pierced his tender nerves with a multiplicity of wounds. And for the depth of his passion, it was as deep as hell itself ; enduring tortures in his soul, as well as torments in his body ; groaning under the burden of desertion, and crying out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* Lastly, For the height of his passion, his sufferings were as high as heaven, his Person being infinite as well as innocent, no less than the Son of God, which adds infinite worth and value to his sufferings. Lord, *let us be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, depth and height, of our Saviour's love* in suffering for us, *and let us know that love of his which passeth knowledge.* Observe, next, The inscription wrote by Pilate over our suffering Saviour : *This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.* It was the manner of the Romans, when they crucified a malefactor, to publish the cause of his death in capital letters placed over the head of the person. Now it is observable, how wonderfully the wisdom of God overruled the heart and pen of Pilate to draw this title, which was truly honourable, and fix it to his cross. Pilate is Christ's herald, and proclaims him *King of the Jews.* Learn hence, That the regal dignity of Christ was proclaimed by an enemy, and that in a time of his greatest sufferings and reproaches : Pilate, without his own knowledge, did our Saviour an eminent piece of service ; he did that for Christ which none of his own disciples durst do ; not that he did it designedly, but from the special overruling providence of God ; no thanks to Pilate for all this, because the highest services performed to Christ undesignedly shall neither be accepted nor rewarded by God. Observe farther, The several aggravations of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross. 1. From the company he suffered with ; *two thieves* : it had been a sufficient disparagement to our blessed Saviour to have been sorted with the best of men ; but to be numbered with the scum of mankind, is such an

indignity as confounds our thoughts. This was designed by the Jews to dishonour and disgrace our Saviour the more, and to persuade the world that he was the greatest of offenders ; but God overruled this also for fulfilling an ancient prophecy concerning the Messiah, *Isa. liii. last verse ; And he was numbered with the transgressors.* 2. Another aggravation of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross, was the scorn and mocking derision which he met with in his dying moments, both from the common people, from the chief priests, and from the thieves that suffered with him. The common people *reviled him, wagging their heads* ; the chief priests, though men of age and gravity, yet barbarously mocked him in his misery ; and not only so, but they atheistically scoff and jeer at his faith and affiance in God ; saying, *He trusted in God that he would deliver him ; let him deliver him, if he will have him.* Where note, That persecutors are generally atheistical scoffers ; the chief priests and elders, though knowing men, yet they blaspheme God ; they mock at his power, and deride his providence, which is as bad as to deny his being ; so that from hence we may gather, That those who administer to God in holy things by way of office, if they be not the best, they are the worst of men. No such bitter enemies to the power of godliness as the ministers of religion, who were never acquainted with the efficacy and power of it upon their own hearts and lives. Nothing on this side hell is worse than a wicked priest, a minister of God devoted to the service of the devil. A third aggravation of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross, was this, that the thieves that suffered with him reviled him with the rest, that is, one of them, as St. Luke has it ; or perhaps both of them might do it at first ; which if so, increases the wonder of the penitent thief's conversion. From the impenitent thief's reviling Christ, we learn, That neither shame nor pain will change the mind of a resolute sinner, but even then when he is in the suburbs of hell will he blaspheme. *They that were crucified with him reviled him* ; but the most aggravating circumstance of all the rest in our Lord's sufferings was this, that he was forsaken of his Father ; *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* Thence learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ, when suffering for our sins, was really deserted and forsaken by his Father, and

left destitute of all sensible consolation! *Why hast thou forsaken me?* Learn farther, That under this desertion Christ despaired not, but still retained a firm persuasion of God's love unto him, and experienced necessary supports from him: *My God, my God:* these are words of affiance and faith. Christ was thus forsaken for us, that we might never be forsaken by God; yet by God's forsaking of Christ, we are not to understand any abatement of divine love, but only a withdrawing from the human nature the sense of his love, and a letting out upon his soul a deep afflicting sense of his displeasure against sin. There is a twofold desertion; the one total, final, and eternal, by which God utterly forsakes a person, both as to grace and glory, being for sin wholly cast out of God's presence, and adjudged to eternal torments. This Christ was not capable of, nor could the dignity of his person admit it. The other is a partial, temporary desertion; when God for a little moment hides his face from his children. Now this was most agreeable to Christ's nature, and also suitable to his office, who was to satisfy the justice of God for our forsaking of him, and to bring us back again to God, that we might be received for ever. Observe, lastly, What a miraculous evidence Christ gave of his Godhead: instantly before he gave up the ghost, *he cried with a loud voice.* This shows he did not die according to the ordinary course of nature, gradually drawing on, as we express it; but his life was whole in him to the last, and nature as strong as it was at first. Other men die by degrees, and towards their end their sense of pain is much blunted; but Christ stood under the pains of death in his full strength, and his life was whole and entire in him to the very last moment. This was evident by the mighty outcry he made when he gave up the ghost, contrary to the sense and experience of all persons. Now he that could cry with such a loud voice as he did (*in articulo mortis*) could have kept himself from dying, if he would. Hence we learn, That when Christ died, he rather conquered death, than was conquered by it; he must voluntarily and freely lay down his life, before death could come at him. Thus died Christ the Captain of our salvation: and, like Samson, became more victorious by his death, than he was in his life.

28 And the vail of the temple was

rent in twain from the top to the bottom. 39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. 40 There were also women looking on afar off; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joses, and Salome; 41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

Three circumstances are here observable; 1. A stupendous prodigy happening upon the death of our Saviour, *the vail of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom*; the vail was a hanging which parted the most holy place from the holy sanctuary. By the rending of which, God testified that he was now about to forsake his temple; that the ceremonial law was now abolished by the death of Christ, and that by the blood of Jesus we have access unto God, and may enter into the holy of holies. See the note on, *Matt. xvii. 51.* Observe, 2. What influence the manner and circumstances of our Saviour's death had upon the centurion, and the soldiers with him: they cry out, *Verily this was the Son of God.* Where observe, That the heathen soldiers are sooner convinced of the divinity of our Saviour than the unbelieving Jewish doctors. Obstinacy and unbelief filled their minds with an invincible prejudice against Christ; so that neither the miracles wrought by him in his life, or at his death, could convince them that Christ was any thing better than an impostor and deceiver. None are so blind as those who through malicious obstinacy and inveterate prejudice will not see. Observe, 3. Who of Christ's friends were witnesses of his death: they are *the women that followed him, and ministered unto him*; not one of his dear disciples came near him, except St. John, who stood by the cross with the Virgin Mary. O what a shame was this, for apostles to be absent from a spectacle upon which the salvation of the whole world did depend! And what an honour was this to the female sex in general, and to these holy women in particular, that they had the courage to follow Christ to his cross, when all

his disciples forsook him and fled! God can make timorous and fearful women bold and courageous confessors of his truth, and fortify them against the fears of suffering, contrary to the natural timorouanness of their temper; these women wait upon Christ's cross, when his apostles fly, and durst not come nigh it.

42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. 44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. 45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. 46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. 47 And Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

The circumstances of our Lord's funeral, and honourable interment in the grave, are here recorded by the evangelist; such a funeral as never was, since graves were first digged. Where observe, 1. Our Lord's body must be begged before it could be buried; the dead bodies of malefactors being in the power and at the disposal of the judge. Pilate grants it, and accordingly the dead body is taken down, wrapped in fine linen, and prepared for the sepulchre. Observe, 2. The person that bestows this honourable burial upon our Saviour: Joseph of Arimathea; a disciple, no doubt, though he did not make a public and open profession; a worthy, though a close disciple. Grace doth not always make a public and open show where it is; as there is much secret riches in the bowels of the earth, which no eye ever saw, so there is much grace in the hearts of some christians that the eye of the world takes little notice of. Some gracious persons cannot put forward, and discover them-

selves in discourse as others; and yet such weak christians, as the world counts them, perhaps shall stand their ground when stronger run away. We read of none of the apostles at Christ's funeral. Fear had chased them away; but Joseph of Arimathea appears boldly. If God strengthens the weak, and leaves the strong to the prevalency of their own fears, *the weak shall be as David, and the strong as tow*. Observe, 3. The mourners that followed our Saviour's hearse; namely, the women which came out of Galilee, and particularly the two Marias; a very poor train of mourners: the apostles were all scattered, and afraid to own their Lord and Master, either dying or dead. And as our Lord affected no pomp or gallantry in his life, so funeral pomp had been no way suitable, neither to the end or manner of his death. Humiliation was designed in his death, and his burial was the lowest degree of humiliation, and therefore might not be pompous. Observe, 4. The grave or sepulchre in which our Lord was buried: it was in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock; in a new sepulchre in a garden. 1. Our Lord was buried in a garden. As by the sin of the first Adam we were driven out of the garden of pleasure, the earthly paradise, so by the sufferings of the second Adam, who lay buried in a garden, we may hope for entrance into the heavenly paradise. 2. It was in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, that so his enemies might have no occasion to cavil, and say that his disciples stole him away by secret holes, or unseen passages under ground. 3. It was in a new sepulchre, in which *never man was laid*; lest his adversaries should say it was some other that was risen, who was buried there before him; or that he rose from the dead by touching some other corpse. Observe, 5. The manner of our Lord's funeral; it was hasty, open, and decent; it was performed in haste by reason of the straits of time; the sabbath was approaching, and they lay all business aside to prepare for that. Learn hence, How much it is our duty to despatch our worldly business as early as we can towards the end of the week, that we may be the better prepared to sanctify the Lord's day, if we live to enjoy it. Hence it is that we are called upon to remember that day before it comes, and to sanctify it when it is come. Again, our Lord was buried openly, as well as hastily; all persons had liberty to be spectators, lest any should

object that there was deceit and fraud used in or about our Saviour's burial; yet was he also interred decently; his holy body being wrapped in fine linen, and perfumed with spices, according to the Jewish custom. Observe, 6. The reasons why our Lord was buried, seeing he was to rise again in as short a time as other men lie by the walls: and had his dead body remained a thousand years unburied, it would have seen no corruption, having never been tainted with sin. Sin is the cause of the body's corruption; it is sin that makes our bodies stink worse than carrion when they are dead. A funeral then was not necessary for Christ's body upon the same accounts that it was necessary for ours. But, 1. Our Lord was buried, to declare the certainty of his death, and the reality of his resurrection; and for this reason did God's providence order it, that he should be embalmed, to cut off all pretensions; for in this kind of embalming, his mouth, his ears, and his nostrils, were all filled with odours and spices, so that there could be no latent principle of life in him: his being thus buried, then, did demonstrate him to be certainly dead. 2. Christ was buried, to fulfil the types and prophecies that went before concerning him: *Jonas's being three days and three nights in the belly of the whale*, was a type of *Christ's being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*; yea, the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 9. declared our Lord's funeral, and the manner of it, long before he was born: *He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death*: pointing by that expression at this tomb of Joseph's, who was a rich man, and laid him in a tomb designed for himself. 3. He was buried to complete his humiliation: *They have brought me to the dust of death*, says David, a type of Christ. This was the lowest step he could possibly descend in his abased state; lower he could not be laid, and so low his blessed head must be laid, else he had not been humbled to the lowest degree of humiliation. 4. Christ went into the grave, that he might conquer death in its own territories and dominions. His victory over the grave causes his saints to triumph and sing, *O grave, where is thy destruction!* Our dear Redeemer has perfumed the bed of the grave by his own lying in it, so that a pillow of down is not so soft to a believer's head as a pil-

low of dust. Observe lastly, Of what use the doctrine of our Lord's burial may be unto his disciples and followers: 1. For instruction, Here we see the amazing depth of our Lord's humiliation; from what, and to what, his love brought him; even from the bosom of his Father to the bosom of the grave. O how doth the depth of his humiliation show us the sufficiency of his satisfaction, and therewith the heinousness of our transgression! 2. For consolation against the fears of death and the grave: the grave received Christ, but could not retain him; death swallowed him up, as the fish did Jonas, but quickly vomited him up again: and so shall it fare with Christ mystical, as it did with Christ personal. As it was done to the Head, so shall it be done to the members; the grave could not long keep him, it shall not always keep us; as his body rested in hope, so shall ours also; and although we see corruption, yet shall we not always lie under the power of corruption. In short, Christ's lying in the grave, has changed and altered the nature of the grave; it was a prison before, a bed of rest now; a loathsome grave before, a perfumed bed now: he whose Head is in heaven, need not fear to put his feet into the grave. *Awake, and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust*, for the enmity of the grave is slain by Christ. 3. For our imitation: let us study and endeavour to be buried with Christ; in respect of our sins, I mean, *Rom. vi. 4. buried with him into death*. Our sins should be as a dead body in several respects. Are dead bodies removed out of the society of men? so should our sins be removed far from us. Do dead bodies in the grave spend and consume by degrees? so should our sins daily. Will dead bodies grow every day more and more loathsome to others? so should our sins be to ourselves. Do dead bodies wax out of memory, and are quite forgotten? so should our sins also, in respect of any delight that we take in remembering of them: we should always remember our sins to our humiliation, but never think or speak of them with the least delight or satisfaction: for this in God's account is a new commission of them, and lays us under an aggravated guilt and condemnation.

## CHAP. XVI.

This last chapter of St. Mark's Gospel contains the history of our Saviour's resurrection, and gives

an account of what he did upon earth, between the time of his triumphant resurrection, and his glorious ascension.

**A**ND when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. 2 And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

The Lord of life was buried on the Friday, in the evening of that day on which he was crucified, and his holy body rested in the silent grave all the next day, and some part of the day following. Thus rose he again the third day, neither sooner nor later: not sooner, lest the truth of his death should have been questioned, that he did not die at all; and not later, lest the faith of his disciples should have failed. Accordingly when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene getting the other women together, she and they set out before day to visit the holy sepulchre; and about sun-rising they get to it, intending with their spices and odours farther to embalm their Lord's body. Here observe, 1. That although the hearts of these holy women did burn with an ardent zeal and affection to their crucified Lord, yet the commanded duties of the sabbath are not omitted by them; they keep close, and silently spend that holy day in a mixture of grief and hope. A good pattern of sabbath sanctification, and worthy of our christian imitation. Observe, 2. These holy women go, but not empty-handed: she that had bestowed a costly alabaster box of ointment upon Christ whilst alive, has prepared no less precious odours for him now dead; thereby paying their last homage to our Saviour's corpse. But what need of odours to perfume a body which could not see corruption? True, this holy body did not want them, but the love and affection of his friends could not withhold them. Observe, 3. How great a tribute of respect and honour is due and payable to the memory of these holy women, for their great magnanimity and courage: they followed Christ when his cowardly disciples left him; they accompanied him to the cross, they followed his hearse to the grave, when his disciples durst not appear; and now very early in the morning they go to visit his sepulchre fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the presence of

the watchmen. Learn hence, That courage is the special gift of God; and if he gives it to the feeble sex, even to timorous and fearful women, it is not in the power of men to make them afraid.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. 5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted. 6 Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him, 7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. 8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Observe here 1. With what pomp and triumph doth our Lord arise; an angel is sent from heaven to roll away the stone. But could not Christ have risen without the angel's help? Yes, doubtless: he that raised himself could surely have rolled away the stone; but God thinks fit to send an officer from heaven to open the prison door of the grave, and by setting our Surety at liberty, proclaims our debt to the divine justice fully satisfied. Besides, it was fit that the angels, who had been witnesses of our Saviour's passion, should also be witnesses of his resurrection. Observe, 2. Our Lord's resurrection declared; *He is risen: he is not here.* Almighty God never intended that the darling of his soul should be left in an obscure sepulchre: *He is not here*, said the angel, where they laid him, where you left him. Death has lost its prey, and the grave has lost its prisoner. Observe, 3. It is not said, he is not here, for he is raised,—but, *He is risen.* The word imports the active power of Christ, or the self-quickenings principle by which Christ raised himself from the dead, *Acts i. 3.*

*He showed himself alive after his passion.* Hence learn, That it was the divine nature, or Godhead of Christ, which raised the human nature from death to life; others were raised from the grave by Christ's power, but he raised himself by his own power. Observe, 4. The testimony or witness given of our Lord's resurrection; that of an angel in human shape, *a young man clothed in a long white garment.* But why is an angel the first publisher of our Saviour's resurrection! Surely the dignity of our Lord's person, and the excellency of his resurrection, require that it should be thus published. How very serviceable and officious the holy angels were in attending upon our Saviour in the days of his flesh, see in the note on *Matt.* xxviii. 6, 7. Observe, 5. The persons to whom our Lord's resurrection was first declared and made known: to women, to the two Marias. But why to women, and why to these women? Why to women? Because God will make choice of weak means for producing great effects; knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honour of the agent. In the whole dispensation of the gospel, God intermixes divine power with human weakness. Thus the conception of Christ was by the power of the Holy Ghost; but his mother a poor woman, a carpenter's spouse: so the crucifixion of Christ was in much meanness and outward baseness, being crucified between two thieves; but the powers of heaven and earth trembling, the rocks rending, the graves opening, showed a mixture of divine power. Thus here, God will honour what instruments he pleases for the accomplishment of his own purposes. But why to these women, the two Marias, is the first discovery made of our Saviour's resurrection? Possibly it was a reward for their magnanimity and masculine courage; these women cleaved to Christ when the apostles forsook him; they assisted at his cross, they attended at his funeral, they waited at his sepulchre; these women had more courage than the apostles, therefore God makes them apostles to the apostles. This was a tacit rebuke, a secret check given to the apostles, that they should be thus outdone by women; these holy women went before the apostles in the last services that were done for Christ, and therefore the apostles here come after them in their rewards and comforts. Observe, 6. The evidence which the angel offers to the women, to evince and prove the verity

and certainty of our Saviour's resurrection, namely, by an appeal to their senses: *Behold the place where they laid him.* The senses when rightly disposed, are the proper judges of all sensible objects, and accordingly Christ himself did appeal to his disciples' senses concerning the truth of his own resurrection: *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.* And indeed if we must not believe our senses, we shall want the best external evidence for the proof of the certainty and truth of the christian religion; namely, the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles: for what assurance can we have of the reality of those miracles but from our senses? Therefore, says our Saviour, *if ye believe not me, yet believe the works that I do:* that is, the miracles which I have wrought before your eyes. Now as my senses tell me that Christ's miracles were true, so they assure me that the doctrine of transubstantiation is false. From the whole note, That the Lord Jesus Christ, by the omnipotent power of his Godhead, revived and rose again from the dead the third day, to the terror and consternation of his enemies, and the unspeakable joy and consolation of believers. Observe lastly, The quick despatch made of the joyful news of our Lord's resurrection to the sorrowful disciples: *Go tell the disciples,* says the angel; *Go tell my brethren,* says Christ, *Matt.* xxviii. 10. Christ might have said, "Go tell those apostate apostles, that cowardly left me in my danger, that durst not own me in the high-priest's hall, that durst not come within the shadow of my cross, nor within sight of my sepulchre;" not a word of this by way of upbraiding them for their late shameful cowardice, but all words of kindness; *Go tell my brethren.* Where note, That Christ calls them brethren after his resurrection and exaltation; thereby showing, that the change of his condition had wrought no change in his affection towards his poor disciples: but those that were his brethren before, in the time of his abasement, are still so after his exaltation and advancement: *Go tell my brethren,* says Christ; *Go tell his disciples, and Peter,* says the angel. Where note, That St. Peter is here particularly named, not because of his primacy and superiority over the rest of the apostles, as the church of Rome would have it, but because he had denied Christ, and for that denial was swallowed up with sorrow and stood



most in need of comfort; therefore, says Christ by the angel, *Speak particularly to Peter, be sure that his sad heart be comforted with this joyful news, that he may know that I am friends with him, notwithstanding his late cowardice: Tell the disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee.* But why into Galilee? Because Jerusalem was now a forsaken place, a people abandoned to destruction; but Galilee was a place where Christ's ministry was more acceptable. Such places shall be most honoured with Christ's presence, where his gospel is most accepted.

9 Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. 10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. 12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told *it* unto the residue; neither believed they them. 14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

An account is here given of a three-fold appearance of Christ after his resurrection. 1. To Mary Magdalene, not to the Virgin Mary; and it is observable, that our blessed Saviour, after his resurrection, first appeared to Mary Magdalene, a grievous sinner, for the comfort of all true penitents. Mary goes immediately to his disciples, whom she finds weeping and mourning, and tells them, *she had seen the Lord; but they believed her not.* The second appearance was to the two disciples going into the country; That is, into the village of Emmaus: as they were in the way, Jesus joined himself to their company, *but their eyes were holden* by the power of God, that they did not discern him in his own proper shape, but apprehended him to be another person whom they conversed with. His third appearance was to the eleven as they sat at

*meat, whom he upbraids with their unbelief; and to convince them effectually that he was risen from the dead, he eats with them a piece of broiled fish, and a honeycomb.* Not that he needed it, being he was now become immortal, but to assure them that he had still the same body. From the whole note, How industriously our Lord endeavours to confirm his disciples' faith in the doctrine of his resurrection; so slack and backward were they to believe that the Messiah was risen again from the dead, that all the predictions of scripture, all the assurances they had received from our Saviour's mouth, yea, all the appearances of our Saviour to them, after he was actually risen from the dead, were little enough to confirm and establish them in the certain belief that he was risen from the dead.

16 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Here our Saviour gives commission to his disciples to congregate and gather a christian church out of all nations, *to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature*; that is, to all reasonable creatures that are capable of it; not to the Jews only, but to the Gentiles also, without any distinction of country, age, or sex, whatsoever. Learn thence, That the apostles and first planters of the gospel had a commission from Christ to go amongst the Pagan Gentiles, without limitation or distinction, to instruct them in the saving mysteries of the gospel. The second branch of their commission was to baptize. Where observe the encouraging promise made by Christ: *he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*; that is, he that receiveth and embraceth the gospel preached by you, and thereupon becomes a proselyte and disciple of Christ, and receives baptism, the seal of the new covenant, shall for all former sins receive pardon, and upon his perseverance obtain eternal life; but he that stands out obstinately and impenitently shall certainly be damned. The two damning sins under the gospel are infidelity and hypocrisy; not receiving Christ for their Lord and Saviour by some, or doing this feignedly by others. Happy are they in whom the preaching of the gospel produceth such a

faith as is the parent and principle of obedience; *He that so believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.* Accordingly some paraphrase the words thus: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; that is, he shall by virtue of the faith in baptism, be put into a state of salvation; so that if he continue in that faith, and do not wilfully recede from his baptismal covenant, he shall actually be saved." Note farther, That they who hence conclude that infants are not capable of baptism, because they cannot believe; must also hence conclude that they cannot be saved, because they cannot believe; for faith is more expressly required to salvation than baptism. Note lastly, That though it be said, *He that believeth, and is baptized, the same shall be saved*; it is not said, He that is not baptized shall be damned; because it is not the want, but the contempt, of baptism that damns, otherwise infants might be damned for their parents' neglect.

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Here we have a gracious promise in Christ, that in order to the spreading and propagating the gospel, as far as may be, the Spirit should be poured forth abundantly from on high upon the apostles, and thereby they should be enabled to work miracles, to cast out devils, to speak strange languages; which we read they did, *Acts ii.* And this power of working miracles continued in the church an hundred years after Christ's ascension, until christianity had taken root in the hearts of men. Irenæus, lib. II. c. 58. says, that many believers, besides the apostles, had this power of working miracles; as new-set plants are watered at first till they have taken fast rooting; so, that the christian faith might grow the faster, God watered it with miracles at its first plantation. Yet observe, That all the miracles which they had power to work were healing and beneficent; not terrifying judgments, but acts of kindness and mercy. It was our Saviour's design to bring over persons to christianity by lenity, mildness, and gen-

leness, not to affright them into a compliance with astonishing judgments, which might affect their fear, but little influence their faith: for the will and consent of persons to the principles of any religion, especially the christian, is like a royal fort, which must not be stormed by violence, but taken by surrender.

19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Here we have that grand article of our christian faith asserted, namely, our Saviour's ascension into heaven, together with his exaltation there, expressed by his *sitting at God's right hand*: he ascended now to heaven in his human nature, for in his divine nature he was there already; as it was necessary that he should thus ascend, in order to his own personal exaltation and glorification. When he was on earth, his humility, patience, and self-denial, were exercised by undergoing God's wrath, the devil's rage, and man's cruelty; now he goes to heaven, that they may be rewarded; he that is a patient sufferer upon earth, shall be a triumphant conqueror in heaven; also with respect to his church on earth, it was needful and necessary that our Lord should ascend up into heaven, namely, to send down the Holy Spirit upon his apostles, which he did at the feast of Pentecost. *If I go not away, says Christ, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart I will send him to you.* And likewise to be a powerful advocate and intercessor with the Father in heaven, on the behalf of his church and children here upon earth. *Heb. ix. 24. Christ is entered into heaven himself, there to appear in the presence of God for us.* Finally, Christ ascended into heaven, to give us an assurance that in due time we should ascend after him, *John xiv. 2. I go to prepare a place for you.* Hence the apostle calls our Saviour, *our forerunner*, *Heb. vi. 19.* Now if Christ in the ascension was a forerunner, then there are some to follow after. To the same purpose is that expression of the apostle, *Eph. ii. 6. He hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ*; that is, we are already sat down in him, and ere long shall sit down by him; we are already sat down in him, as our head, and shall hereafter sit down by him as his members. The only way to this, namely, to ascend unto, and sit down

with Christ in heaven, is to live like him, and to live unto him here on earth : *If any man love me, he will follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be*, St. John xii. 26.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Observe here, first, The general publication of the gospel by the apostles : they went forth and preached *every where*. Secondly, The reason of the efficacy and success of it, namely, that divine and miraculous power which accompanied the preaching of it ; *The Lord wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following*. Observe, 1. The general publication of the gospel by the apostles : *They went forth, and preached every where*. The industry of the holy apostles was incredibly great, yet was their success greater than their industry, even beyond all human expectation ; which will evidently appear, if we consider, 1. The vast spreading of the gospel so far in so short a space of time ; for in thirty years' time after Christ's death, it was spread through the greatest part of the Roman empire, and reached as far as Parthia and India. 2. The wonderful power and efficacy which the gospel had upon the lives and manners of men ; the generality of those that entertained the gospel were obedient to it, both in word and deed, because christianity, being an hated and persecuted profession, no man could have any inducement to embrace it, that did not resolve to practise it, and lived up unto it. 3. The weakness and meanness of the instruments that were employed in propagating the gospel, shows the success of it to be very great and strange ; a company of plain and illiterate men, most of them destitute of the advantages

of education, and unassisted by the countenance of any authority whatsoever, yet did they in a short space draw the world after them. The powerful opposition which was raised against the gospel, namely, the prejudices of education, the power of indwelling lusts, and also the powers of the world then in being, did strongly combine against it ; yet did christianity bear up against all this opposition, and made its way through all the resistance that the lusts and prejudices of men, armed with the power and authority of the whole world, could make against it. 4. The great discouragements that men were then under to embrace the gospel and the christian profession ; all the evils of this world threatened them, mockings and scourgings, banishments and imprisonments, reproach and ruin ; death in all its fearful shapes was presented to them, to deter them from embracing this religion. Observe therefore, 2. The reason of this wonderful success : *The Lord wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following*. *The Lord wrought with them* ; this points at the inward operation of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of men. O it is sweet and prosperous working in fellowship with Christ and his Holy Spirit ; he directs his ministers, he assists them, he guides their lips, influences their minds, quickens their affections, sets home their instructions, and crowns all their endeavours with his blessing. *And confirmed the word with signs* ; that is, confirmed their doctrines with miracles, such as healing diseases, raising the dead, casting out devils, inflicting corporal diseases on scandalous persons, and sometimes death itself. From the whole we gather the truth and divinity of the christian religion, that it was and is certainly of God, and therefore never could, never can be overthrown.

## HOLY GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

## SAINT LUKE.

## CHAP. I.

**F**ORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

This gospel, together with the Acts of the Apostles, were written by St. Luke, the beloved physician, and companion of St. Paul, who wrote, as did the rest of the evangelists, by the special direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost: where we may profitably remark the wonderful wisdom of God, who, in order to the confirming our faith in the truth of the gospel, raised up a sufficient number of witnesses to testify the verity and infallible certainty of all that the gospel delivers unto us. Now this evangelist, St. Luke, dedicates this gospel, together with the Acts of the Apostles, to Theophilus, who was, as some think, an honourable senator; or a renowned and eminent person in the church, as others suppose. But many take the word Theophilus, not for a proper name, but common name, signifying every one that loveth God; to whom St. Luke addresses his discourse. The first four verses of this chapter are a preface to the following history, and acquaint us with the reasons which induced St. Luke to write, namely, because divers persons in that age had imprudently and inconsiderately set upon writing Gospels, without direction from the

Spirit of God, whose errors and mistakes were to be corrected by a true narrative. This St. Luke declares he was able to make, having had perfect understanding and knowledge of the truth of those things he was about to relate: partly by his familiarity with St. Paul, and partly by his conversation with the other apostles, who, constantly attending our Saviour, were eye and ear witnesses of those things that are the subject-matter of the ensuing history. Hence learn, 1. That there were some apocryphal writings (or writings which were not of divine authority) relating to the New Testament, as well as to the Old; as the books of Asher, Gad, and Iddo, are recited in the Old Testament, but were never received into the canon of the Scripture. So were there some Gospels, or historical relations of our Saviour's life and actions, wrote by persons which the church never received, as not having the impress of God's ordination. Note, 2. That the Gospels which St. Luke and the other evangelists wrote have nothing of fallibility or uncertainty in them: they wrote nothing but what they either heard or saw themselves, or else received from those that were eye and ear witnesses of matter of fact: *It seemed good to me to write, having had perfect knowledge of all things from the very first.*

5 **T**HERE was, in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

In this and the following verses, the Holy Ghost gives us a description of John the Baptist, who was the harbinger and forerunner of our Saviour Christ; he is described, first by his parentage, being the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. This Zacharias

was a priest, who had a course in the temple, or a right to officiate there when it came to his turn; for we read in 1 *Chron.* xxiv. 10. that *David appointed the priests, the sons of Aaron, to minister by turns, and divided them into four and twenty courses*, every one ministering in the temple by their weeks. Here note, That Zacharias a priest, and attending the service of the temple, was a married person, having one of the daughters of Aaron to wife, according to the command of God, Lev. xxi. 14. where the priest is required to marry one of his own people. Learn hence, That neither the priests under the law did, nor the ministers of Christ under the gospel ought, to abhor the marriage-bed; nor judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The doctrine of the church of Rome, which forbids to marry, St. Paul calls a doctrine of devils,

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

Observe here, 1. The sweet harmony of this religious couple in the ways of God: *they both walked in the commandments of God*. It is an happy match when husband and wife are one, not only in themselves, but in the Lord. Observe, 2. The universality of their holiness and obedience: *they walked, not in some, but in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord*. Such as will approve themselves to be sincerely religious, must make conscience of every known duty, and endeavour to obey every precept and command of God. Observe, 3. The high commendation which the Holy Spirit of God gives of this their religious course of holiness and obedience: they are pronounced *blameless*. He that liveth without gross sin, in a gospel sense, liveth blameless, and without sin. To live without gross sin, is our holiness on earth; to live without any sin, will be our happiness in heaven. Many sins may be in him that has true grace; but he that has truth of grace, cannot allow himself in any sin. Such are the condescensions of the covenant of grace, that sincere obedience is called perfection. Truth of grace is our perfection on earth, but in heaven we shall have perfection as well as truth. Observe, lastly, A pattern for their imitation who wait at God's altar, and are employed in and about holy things: such ought all the ministers of the

gospel and their wives to be, what Zacharias and Elisabeth are here said to be, namely, *blameless*; that is, very innocent and inoffensive in their daily conversation.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

Observe here, 1. This holy pair, Zacharias and Elisabeth, were fruitful in holy obedience, but barren in children: a fruitful soul and a barren womb are consistent, and do oft-times meet together. This religious couple made no less progress in virtue than in age, and yet their virtue could not make their age fruitful. Observe, 2. Elisabeth was barren in the flower of her age, but much more so in old age. Hence was a double obstacle, and consequently a double instance of divine power in the birth of John the Baptist, showing him to be a prophet very extraordinary, and miraculously sent by God. Observe, 3. That when Almighty God in old times did long delay to give the blessing of children to holy women, he rewarded their expectation with the birth of some eminent and extraordinary person. Thus Sarah, after long barrenness, brought forth an Isaac; Rebecca, a Jacob; Rachel, a Joseph; Hannah, a Samuel; and Elisabeth, St. John the Baptist. When God makes his people wait long for a particular mercy, if he sees it good for them, he gives it in at last with a double reward for their expectation.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

Here note, 1. That none but a son of Aaron might offer incense to God in the temple; and not every son of Aaron neither; nay, not any of them at all seasons. God is a God of order, and hates confusion no less than irreligion. And as under the law of old, so under the gospel of this day, *no man ought to take this honour upon him, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*. Observe, 2. That there were courses of ministration in the legal services, in which the priests did relieve one another weekly. God never purposed to burden any of his servants with devotion, nor is he pleased when his service is made

burdensome, either to or by his ministers. Many of the sons of Aaron served together in the temple, according to the variety of their employments, which were assigned them by lot. And accordingly it fell out at this time, that Zachary was chosen by lot to burn incense. Observe, 3. That morning and evening, twice a day, the priests offered up their incense to God, that both parts of the day might be consecrated to him, who was the maker and giver of their time. This incense offered under the law, represents our prayers offered to God under the gospel. These Almighty God expects that we should, all his church over, send up to him morning and evening. The ejaculatory elevations of our hearts should be perpetual: but if twice a day we do not present God with our solemn invocation, we make the gospel less officious than the law; and can we reasonably think that Almighty God will accept of less now than would content him then?

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

Observe here, 1. While the incense was burning, the people were praying: while the priest sends up his incense in the temple within, the people send up their prayers in the court without. The incense of the priest and the prayers of the people meet, and go up to heaven together. Hence learn, That it is a blessed thing, when both minister and people jointly offer up their prayers for each other at the same throne of grace, and mutually strive together in their supplications, one with, and one for, another. Observe, 2. How both priest and people keep their place and station: the priest burns incense in the holy place, and the people offer up their prayers in the outward court. The people might no more go into the holy place to offer up their prayers, than Zachary might go into the holy of holies to burn incense. Whilst the partition-wall stood betwixt Jew and Gentile, there was also a partition betwixt the Jews themselves. But now, under the gospel, every man is a priest to God, and may enter the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus. But, Lord! what are we the better for this great and gracious freedom of access to thee, if we want hearts to prize and improve our privilege from thee!

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

Whilst Zachary was praying to God, an angel appears to Zachary. When we are nearest God, the good angels are nearest us: they are most with us, when we are most with him. The presence of angels with us is no novelty, but their apparition to us is so. They are always with us, but rarely seen by us. Let our faith see them, whom our senses cannot discern. Their assumed shapes do not make them more present, but only more visible. Observe, 2. The place, as well as the time, when the angel appeared: in the temple, and at the altar, and on the right side of the altar of incense. As the holy angels are always present with us in our devotions, so especially in religious assemblies; as in all places, so most of all in God's house; they rejoice to be with us whilst we are with God, but they turn their faces from us when we go about our sins.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

It was partly the suddenness, partly the unexpectedness, and partly the glory, of the apparition, that affrighted this good man. Glorious and sudden apparitions, do affright even the holiest and best of men. We cannot bear the sight and presence of an angel without consternation and fear, in our frail and sinful state. O happy hour, when, mortality and sin being taken out of our natures, we shall not only behold the glorified angels without fear, but the glorious God with delight and love! Lord! let me now see thee by faith, hereafter by sight: *Sit in alio seculo, non in hoc! Visio tua, merces mea.* Genon.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Observe here, 1. How apprehensive this good angel was of Zachary's surprising fear, and encourages him against it. The holy angels, though they do not express it in words, yet they pity our frailties, and suggest comfort to us. The evil angels, if they might, would kill us with terror; the good angels labour together for our tranquillity and cheerfulness: *The angel said unto him, Fear not.* Observe, 2. The comfortable words spoken by the angel to Zacharias; *Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son.* No doubt, Zachary and Elisabeth had often prayed

for a child, and now God sends them one when they least expected it. Learn hence, That sometimes God gives in a mercy to us when we least expect it; yea when we have given over looking for it. No doubt it was the case here, *Zachary and Elisabeth being both well stricken in age*. Observe, 3. The name which the angel directed Zachary to give his son: *Thou shalt call his name John*, which signifies *gracious*; because he was to open the kingdom of grace, and to preach the grace of the gospel through Jesus Christ. The giving of significant names to children, has been an ancient and pious practice; names which either carried a remembrance of duty or of mercy in them.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Here the angel declares to Zachary, what kind of son should be born unto him, even one of eminent endowments, and designed for extraordinary services. The proof of children makes them either the blessings or crosses of their parents. What greater comfort could Zachary desire in a child, than is here promised to him? (1.) He hears of a son that should *bring joy to himself, and many others*; even to all that did expect the coming of the Messiah, whose forerunner the Baptist was. (2.) *That he should be great in the sight of the Lord*: that is, a person of great eminency, and great usefulness in the church. A person of great riches and reputation is great in the sight of men; but the man of great ability and usefulness, the man of great integrity and serviceableness, he is truly *great in the sight of the Lord*. They are little men in the sight of the Lord, that live in the world to little purposes; who do little service to God,

and bring little honour and glory to him. But the man that does all the possible service he can for God, and the utmost good that he is capable of doing to all mankind; he is a person *great in the sight of the Lord*; and such was the holy Baptist. (3.) It is foretold that he should *drink neither wine nor strong drink*; that is, that he should be a very temperate and abstemious person, living after the manner of the Nazarites, though he was not separated by any vow of his own, or his parents, but by the special designation and appointment of God only. It was forbidden the priests under the law to drink either wine or strong drink, upon pain of death, during the time of their ministration, *Lev. x. 9*. And the ministers of Christ under the gospel are forbidden to be lovers of wine, *1 Tim. iii. 3*. (4.) *He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb*; that is, he shall be furnished abundantly with the extraordinary gifts and sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit, which shall very early appear to be in him, and upon him. (5.) His high and honourable office is declared: that he should *go before the Messiah*, as his harbinger and forerunner, with the same spirit and zeal and courage against sin, which was found in the old prophet Elias, whom he did so nearly resemble. (6.) The great success of his ministry is foretold; namely, *That he should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*; that is, the hearts of the Jews to the Gentiles, say some; that he should bring men, say others, even the most disobedient and rebellious Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and sinners, unto repentance, and unto the minding of justice and righteousness, and all moral duties; and thus he *made ready a people for the Lord*, by fitting men to receive Christ upon his own terms and conditions; namely, faith and repentance. From the whole note, That those whom Almighty God designs for eminent usefulness in his church, he furnishes with endowments suitable to their employment; and when he calls to extraordinary service, comes in with more than ordinary assistance. Here was the holy Baptist extraordinarily called, and as extraordinarily furnished for his office and ministry.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife

well stricken in years. 19 And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. 20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak; until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. 21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. 22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

Observe here, Zachary being slow to believe so strange a message, asks the angel by what sign he should know that this thing, so far above the ordinary course of nature, should come to pass? The angel answers, that he was despatched by God as a messenger extraordinary, to declare this good news to him. And seeing he was so hard to believe it, and required a sign, he should have it, but such a one as should be a punishment of his unbelief, as well as a sign to confirm his faith; namely, he should from thenceforward, to the birth of the child, be dumb and deaf, as the original word signifies. Because he had not hearkened to the angel's speech he was struck deaf; and because he had gainsaid it, he was made dumb. Learn hence, That the word of God in the mouth of his messengers is God's own word, and as such to be received and believed. 2. That not believing their word, is a sin which God will severely punish: it is all one not to believe God, and not to believe the messengers of God speaking from him. Some expositors will have this dumbness of Zachary to be prefigurative. The priest, at the dismission of the people, when the service of the temple was finished, was to pronounce the blessing, recorded *Numb. vi. 24, 25.* which when Zachary was about to do, he is struck dumb, and cannot perform it; signifying thereby, that the silencing of the Levitical priesthood was now at hand; that they must expect another kind of worship, and that he who

was able to bless indeed, namely, the Messiah, was near at hand. Observe lastly, That though Zachary ceased to speak, yet he did not cease to minister; he takes not his dumbness for a dismission, but stays out the eight days of his course, knowing that the service of his heart and hand would be accepted of that God which had bereaved him of his tongue. Those powers which we have we must make use of in the public service of God, who will accept us according to what we have; pardoning our infirmity, and rewarding our sincerity.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. 24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, 25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

The priests, during the time of their administration, had their lodgings in buildings appertaining to the temple. Zachary having ended his administration, leaves his lodgings, and returns to his house, where his wife Elisabeth conceiving, *she hides herself*; that is, retires from company, partly to prevent the discourse of people, until it was out of all doubt that she had conceived: and partly to give herself opportunity of returning her thankful acknowledgments unto God, who had given her this miraculous mercy: and had thereby taken away her reproach of barrenness, which was so heavy and insupportable among the Jews. Note here two things, 1. How piously Elisabeth ascribes this mercy to the power of God: *Thus hath the Lord dealt with me.* It is God that keeps the key of the womb in his own hand, and makes the fruit of it his reward, and therefore children are to be owned as his special gift. Note, 2. How great a reproach bodily barrenness is in the sight of man, but not so great as spiritual barrenness in the sight of God: for this is at once a reproach to God, a reproach to religion, a reproach to professors, and to ourselves.

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27 To a virgin espoused



to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. 29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

In this history of our Saviour's miraculous and immaculate conception, we have several things observable, as, 1. The messenger sent from heaven to publish the news of the conception of the Son of God: *an angel*. An evil angel was the first author of our ruin, a good angel could not be the author of our restoration, but is the joyful reporter of it. Observe, 2. The angel's name: *Gabriel*, which signifies the power of God. The same angel who had many hundred years before declared to the prophet Daniel the coming of the Messiah. Observe, 3. The place which the angel is sent unto: *Nazareth*, an obscure place, little taken notice of; yea, a city in Galilee, out of which arises no prophet: even there doth the God of prophets condescend to be conceived. No blind corner of Nazareth can hide the Blessed Virgin from the angel. The favours of God will find out his children wherever they are withdrawn. Observe, 4. The person whom the angel is sent unto, *to a virgin espoused, whose name was Mary*: for the honour of virginity, Christ chose a virgin for his mother; for the honour of marriage, a virgin espoused to an husband. Observe, 5. The message itself: *Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women*. Where note, That the angel salutes the Vir-

gin as a saint, he doth not pray to her as a goddess. The church of Rome idolatrously uses these words as a prayer to the Holy Virgin, (saying ten Ave Marias for one Pater Noster,) whereas they are only a salutation; declaring that she, above all women, had the honour freely conferred by God upon her to be the mother of the Messiah. The original word signifies, not *full of grace*, but *freely beloved*. Compare Mary with other renowned women, and what had she, besides this favour, more than they. Had she the spirit of prophecy? so had they; had she the spirit of sanctification? so had they: and she had no more immunity and freedom from sin and death than they. Accordingly, says the angel, *Blessed art thou among women*: he doth not say, *Blessed art thou above women*. Let the church of Rome be as copious as they will in the commendation of the mother, so they do not derogate from the glory of the Son. But how senseless are they, 1. In turning a salutation into a prayer! 2. In making use of these words upon every occasion, which were spoken by an angel upon a special occasion! 3. In applying these words to her now in heaven, which suited with her only when she was here on earth, saying, *full of grace* to her who is full of glory; and, *the Lord is with thee*, to her that is with the Lord! Observe, 6. The effect which the sight and salutation of the angel had upon the Holy Virgin: she was afraid. If Zachary before her was amazed at the sight of the angel, much more the Virgin, her sex subjecting her to fear. All passions, but particularly the passion of fear, disquiets the heart, and makes it unfit to receive the messages of God. Therefore the angel instantly says unto her, *Fear not*; let joy enter into thy heart, out of whose womb shall come salvation. Thus the fears of holy persons do end in comfort: joy was the errand which the angel came upon, and not terror. What little cause she had to fear the presence of an angel, who was so highly favoured of him, at whose presence the angels tremble! But we see the holiest person on earth cannot bear the presence of an *holy angel*, much less the presence of an *holy God*; nor stand before the manifestation of his favour: Lord! how unable then will the wicked be at the great day to stand before the manifestation of thy fury! If the sight of an holy angel now makes the best of saints to quake and tremble, what will the sight of an infinitely holy and just God then

do, when the wicked shall be slain by the brightness of his presence? Observe lastly. The character which the angel gives of the person that should be born of the blessed virgin: *He shall be great, and called the Son of the Highest.* Great in respect of his person; great in respect of his offices; great in respect of his kingdom; for God would settle upon him a spiritual kingdom, of which David's earthly one was a type, which never shall be abolished: though the administration of it by the word and sacraments shall cease at the day of judgment, when he shall deliver up his kingdom, in that respect to his Father. All other kingdoms have had, or shall have their periods; but the gospel-church, which is Christ's kingdom, shall continue till his kingdom of glory be revealed.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Observe here, 1. The Virgin's question; *how shall this be?* This question doth not import her denial of the possibility of the thing, but her wonder at the strangeness of the thing; it proceeded rather from a desire of information, than from a doubt of infidelity. Therefore she doth not say this cannot be, nor, how can this be? but, *How shall this be?* She doth not distrust, but demand how her virginity should become fruitful, and how she, being a virgin, could bring forth a son? Observe, 2. The angel's reply to the Virgin's question; *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.* Where note, The angel declares the author who, but not the manner how: the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, but in what way, and after what manner,

is not declared. No mother knows the manner of her natural conception; what presumption had it then been, for the mother of the Messiah, to have enquired how the Son of God could take flesh and blood of his creature? It is for none but the Almighty to know those works which do immediately concern himself. Observe, 3. The holy and immaculate conception of our blessed Redeemer: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God;* that is, the Holy Ghost shall prepare and sanctify so much of thy flesh, blood, or seed, as shall constitute the body of Christ. For though it was a work of the whole Trinity, yet it is ascribed particularly to the Holy Ghost, sanctification being his peculiar work. And the title and epithet of *that holy thing*, sheweth the purity and immaculateness of Christ's human nature, and that none was ever born thus holy and immaculate but Christ only; because none had ever such a way and means of conception, but only he: *therefore that holy thing shall be called the Son of God;* not constituted and made, but evidenced and declared. Christ was God before he assumed flesh, even from eternity; but his taking flesh in this manner evidences him to be the Son of God. Observe, 4. The argument used by the angel to confirm Mary in the belief of what he had told her: namely, the wonderful conception of her cousin Elisabeth in *her old age*, who was now *six months gone with child*. Where observe, 1. What an exact knowledge God has, and what a particular notice he takes of all the children of men; he knoweth not only ourselves, but our relations also: *Behold thy cousin Elisabeth.* The knowledge which God has of every person, and every action, is a clear and distinct knowledge. Note, 2. How the angel strengthens her faith by a consideration drawn from the almighty power of God: *With God nothing shall be impossible*, be it never so strange and difficult. There is no such way to overcome difficulties, as by strengthening our faith in the almighty power of God. Faith will enable us to assent to truth, though seemingly incredible, and to believe the possibility of things, though appearing impossible. Observe lastly, How the Virgin expresses

her faith and obedience, her submission and entire resignation, to the divine pleasure, to be disposed of by God as he thought fit : *Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.* We hear of no more objections or interrogations, but an humble and submissive silence. Learn hence, That a gracious heart, when once it understands the pleasure of God, argues no farther, but quietly rests in a believing expectation of what God will do. All disputations with God, after his will is made known and understood, arise from infidelity and unbelief. The Virgin having thus consented, instantly conceived by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost.

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda ; 40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41 And it came to pass, that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb : and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. 42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ? 44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed is she that believed : for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Observe here, 1. The visit made by the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elisabeth. The Holy Virgin had understood by the angel, that Elisabeth was no less akin to her in condition than in relation, being both fruitful in conception ; she hastens into the hill-country to visit that holy matron. The two wonders of the world were now met under one roof, to congratulate their mutual happiness ; only the meeting of the saints in heaven can parallel the meeting of these two saints on earth. Observe, 2. The design and intention of this visit ; which was partly to communicate their joys to each other, and partly to strengthen the faith of

each other. Such a soul as has Christ spiritually conceived in it, is restless and cannot be quiet till it has imparted its joy. Observe, 3. The effect of the Virgin's salutation : she had no sooner saluted Elisabeth, *but the babe in Elisabeth's womb leaped for joy*, doing homage, and paying adoration to his Lord, who was then in presence. If Elisabeth and her holy babe thus rejoiced, when Christ came under their roof, how should our hearts leap within us, when the Son of God vouchsafes to come into the secret of our souls, not to visit us for an hour, but to dwell with us, yea, to dwell in us, and that for ever ? Observe, 4. How Elisabeth by an extraordinary spirit of prophecy, confirms what the angel before had told the Holy Virgin : *Blessed, says she, art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb ; and what an honour is this, that the mother of my Lord should come to me !* Where note, How Elisabeth acknowledgeth the incarnation of Christ, and the union of the divine and human nature in the person of the Mediator. She acknowledges Christ her Lord, and Mary to be the mother of the Son of God. Observe lastly, How the Virgin is pronounced blessed ; not so much for carrying Christ in her womb by sense, as for bearing him in her heart by faith : *Blessed is she that believed.* Mary was not so blessed in bringing forth Christ, as believing in him ; yet the believing here mentioned I take to be her firm assent to the message which was brought her by the angel ; as if Elisabeth had said, " Dumbness was inflicted on my husband for his unbelief of what the angel said," but, " Blessed art thou that didst believe the angel." My husband a man, an aged man, a learned and eminent man, a priest of the most high God, and the message to him of more appearing possibility, yet he disbelieved ; but thou, a woman, a mean, unlearned woman, of a private condition, and the message brought most incredible both to nature and reason, and yet it is believed by thee ! *Blessed therefore is she that believed : and know, that as a reward for thy faith, all things shall certainly be performed that were foretold thee from the Lord.* Learn hence, 1. That it is the property of God to do great and wonderful things. Our faith must be great, and our expectation great ; great expectations from God honour the greatness of God. 2. That if our faith be great, God's performances will be gracious and full : *Blessed is she that believed : for there shall be a per-*

*formance of those things which were told her from the Lord.*

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things: and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. 54 He hath holpen his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy; 55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

This is the first canticle, or song of praise, recorded in the New Testament, composed by the Blessed Virgin with unspeakable joy, for designing her to be the instrument of the conception and birth of the Saviour of the world. Where observe, 1. The manner of her praise: her soul and spirit bear their part in the work of thanksgiving, *My soul doth magnify, my spirit hath rejoiced.* As the sweetest music is made in the belly of the instrument, so the most delightful praise arises from the bottom of the heart. Observe, 2. The object of her praise: she doth not magnify herself, but the Lord; yea, she doth not rejoice so much in her son, as in her Saviour. Where note, 1. That she doth implicitly own and confess herself a sinner; for none need a Saviour but a sinner. And, 2. By rejoicing in Christ as her Saviour, she declares how she values herself, rather by her spiritual relation to Christ as his member, than by her natural relation to him as his mother; according to that of St. Austin, *Beatior fuit Maria percipiendo Christi fidem, quam concipiendo carnem*; she might have been miserable notwithstanding she bore him as her son,

had she not believed in him as her Saviour: therefore she sings, *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.* Observe, 3. How she admires and magnifies God's peculiar favour towards herself, in casting an eye upon her poverty and lowly condition; that she, a poor obscure maid, unknown to the world, should be looked upon with an eye of regard by him that dwells in the highest heavens. Where note, That as God magnified her, she magnified him, ascribing all honour and glory to him that had thus dignified and exalted her: *He that is mighty hath done for me great things, and glorified be his name.* Observe, 4. She thankfully takes notice, that it was not only an high honour, but a lasting honour, which was conferred upon her: *All generations shall call me blessed.* She beholds an infinite, lasting honour prepared for her, as being the mother of an universal and everlasting Blessing, which all former ages had desired, and all succeeding ages should rejoice in, and proclaim her happy for being the instrument of. Observe, 5. How the Holy Virgin passes from the consideration of her personal privileges to the universal goodness of God: showing us that the mercies and favours of God were not confined and limited to herself, but *his mercy is on all them that fear him throughout all generations.* She declares the general providence of God towards all persons: his mercy to the pious, *his mercy is on all them that fear him*; his justice on the proud, *he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts*: his bounty to the poor, *he fills the hungry with good things.* Learn hence, The excellency and advantageous usefulness of the grace of humility; how good it is to be meek and lowly in heart. This will render us lovely in God's eye; and though the world trample upon us, he will exalt us to the admiration of ourselves, and the envy of our despisers. Observe lastly, How she magnifies the special grace of God in our redemption: *He hath holpen his servant Israel*; that is, blessed them with a Saviour, who lived in the faith, hope, and expectation, of the promised Messiah: and this blessing he declares was, 1. The result of great mercy; *He remembering his mercy, hath holpen his servant Israel.* 2. The effect of his truth and faithfulness in his promises, *As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.* Learn hence, That

the appearance of the promised Messiah in the fulness of time, in order to the redemption and salvation of a lost world, was the fruit of God's tender love, and the effect of his faithfulness in the promises made of old to his church and children: *He hath holpen his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our forefathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house. 57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. 58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

Two things are here observable, 1. The civil courtesy of the Virgin Mary towards her cousin Elisabeth. She stays with her three months, probably till she was delivered and brought to bed, not leaving her just at the time of her travail; for the angel told Mary, ver. 36. that it was then the *sixth month* with Elisabeth, after which Mary stays with her *three months*, which made up the full time. To visit and accompany our friends in the time of their distress, is not only an act of civil courtesy, but of religion and piety; not a matter of indifference, but of duty: *James i. 27. Pure religion and undefiled is this, to visit in affliction*; that is, this is an eminent act and exercise of religion, the evidence and fruit of sincere religion; and the Virgin's doing this, was an act and instance of her piety, as well as of her civil courtesy. Observe, 2. The religious joy, and spiritual rejoicing, which the neighbours and kindred expressed at the lying-in of Elisabeth. They did not meet together upon that great occasion only to eat and drink and make merry; *but they rejoiced that the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her.* Oh, how rarely is this example followed in our age! At the delivery of the mother, and at the birth of the child, how little is God taken notice of! How little is his power magnified, and his goodness celebrated, in opening the womb, in giving strength to bring forth! And how rarely is this the subject of discourse at the woman's labour! Verily, if the mercy of a child, and the safe deli-

very of the mother, be not the first and principal things taken notice of at such rejoicing meetings, they look more like Pagan than christian rejoicings.

59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. 60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. 61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. 62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. 64 And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. 64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. 65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these things were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea: 66 And all they that had heard *them* laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Observe here, 1. The circumcision of the child at eight days old, according to the commandment, *Gen. xvii.* Where note, first, The act, *circumcising*. Secondly, the time, *At eight days old.* God commanded every male child to be circumcised, because the males by the foreskin propagate sin, and convey original impurity. By this ordinance God gave his people to understand the exceeding filthiness of sin, and that man brings something into the world with him, which ought presently to be cut off. Note also, The time of circumcising the child, *At eight days old*: not before, lest the child should be too weak to bear the pain; and it must not be deferred longer, lest God interpret the delay to be a contempt of the ordinance. Hence by the way we may learn, That God did not tie salvation to the outward sacrament; for if the child had perished that died uncircumcised, it had been an hard thing to defer circumcision eight hours. 'Tis not the want, but the contempt and neglect, of the sacrament that damns: *It came to pass on the eighth day*

they came to circumcise the child. We find in scripture the ordinance appointed, and the time limited, but neither the person nor the place declared; *Moses' wife circumcised the child, and that in an inn*, Exod. iv. A duty is sometimes positively enjoined in the scripture, when the circumstances belonging to the duty are undetermined. Thus the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is appointed by Christ; but the time, the place, the gesture, are not positively commanded, but to be prudentially determined. Observe, 2. The name is given, or at least declared, at the time of the child's circumcising, and that by his parents: *His mother said, He shall be called John*. But how did his mother know that, when her husband was dumb? *As*. 'Tis like her husband Zachary had by a writing informed his wife concerning the whole vision, and what name was imposed upon him by the angel; therefore she says, *He shall be called John*, and Zachary ratifies it, *His name is John*. The nomination was originally from the angel, the imposition of the name is now at circumcision from the parents. Observe, 3. How ancient a custom it has been to give names to children according to the names of their fathers or kindred: *There is none of thy kindred of this name*, say they. The Jews made it a part of religion to give suitable names to their children, and significant names. Accordingly they either gave them names to put them in remembrance of God's mercy to them, or of their duty to him. Thus Zachary signifies *the remembrance of God*; which name points at God's mercy in remembering him, and his duty in remembering God. Well then, it is usual and useful for parents to give significant names to their children: then let children have an holy ambition to make good the signification of their names. Thus, John signifies *the grace of God*; but how will that gracious name rise up in judgment against that child that is graceless! Observe, 4. How Zachary's speech is immediately restored to him upon the naming of his child. The angel, ver. 20. told him, *he should be dumb, till the things that he had told him should be performed*; and now that they were performed, *his tongue is loosed, and he praised God* in a most thankful manner. Observe, 5. The effect which all this had upon the neighbourhood: *Fear came upon all them that dwell round about them*; that is, an awful and religious fear

of God, occasioned by these miraculous operations: and they *laid up these sayings in their hearts*; that is, considered of them, and pondered upon them. It argues a very vain spirit and temper of mind, when we pass over the observation of God's wonderful acts with a slight regard. The true reason why we do so little admire the wonderful works of God is, because we consider so little of them. Observe, 6. The special favour vouchsafed by God to this child John: *The hand of the Lord was with him*; that is, God was in a special manner present with him, to direct and assist him, to protect and prosper him. The *hand* of God, in scripture, signifies the help of God, the strength and assistance of God. The hand of man is a weak and impotent hand, a short and ineffectual hand: but the hand of God is a strong hand, an almighty hand, able to assist and help, able to protect and preserve: *The hand of the Lord was with him*; that is, the hand of God and the help of God; the love and favour of God, to support him, the power and providence of God to protect and preserve him. Lord, let our hearts be with thee, and then thy heart and thy helping hand will be with us.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, 73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74 That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. 76 And thou, child, shalt be called The Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his

ways ; 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins ; 78 Through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, 79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Here observe, 1. That no sooner was Zachary recovered and restored to his speech, but he sings the praises of his Redeemer, and offers up a thanksgiving to God. The best return we can make to God for the use of our tongue, for the giving or restoring of our speech, is to publish our Creator's praise, to plead his cause, and vindicate his honour. Observe, 2. What it is that Zachary makes the subject-matter of his song : what is the particular and special mercy which he praises and blesses God for. It is not for his own particular and private mercy, namely, the recovery of his speech, though undoubtedly he was very thankful to God for that mercy ; but he blesses and praises God for catholic and universal mercies bestowed upon his church and people. He doth not say, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, that hath visited me in mercy, that hath once more loosed my tongue, and restored my speech ; but, *Blessed be the Lord that hath visited and redeemed his people.* Whence learn, That it is both the duty and disposition of a gracious soul to abound in praise and thankfulness to God, more for catholic and universal mercies towards the church of God, than for any particular and private mercies how great soever, towards himself : *Blessed be God for visiting and redeeming his people.* Observe, 3. In this evangelical hymn there is a prophetic prediction, both concerning Christ and concerning John. Concerning Christ he declares, that God the Father had sent him of his free mercy and rich grace, yet in performance of his truth and faithfulness, and according to his promise and oath which he had made to Abraham and the fathers of the Old Testament. Where note, 1. He blesses God for the comprehensive blessing of the Messiah : *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited his people ;* namely, in his Son's incarnation. The Lord Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time, made such a visit to this sinful world, as men and angels admired at, and will

admire to all eternity. Note, 2. The special fruit and benefit of this gracious and merciful visitation, and that was the redemption of a lost world : He hath visited and redeemed his people. This implies that miserable thralldom and bondage which we were under to sin and Satan, and expresses the stupendous love of Christ, in buying our lives with his dearest blood ; and both by price and power rescuing us out of the hands of our spiritual enemies. Note, 3. The character given of this Saviour and Redeemer : He is an horn of salvation ; that is, a royal and glorious, a strong and powerful, Saviour to his church and people. The horn in scripture signifies glory and dignity, strength and power ; as the beauty, so the strength of the beast lies in his horn : now Christ being styled an horn of salvation, intimates that he himself is a royal and princely Saviour, and that the salvation which he brings is great and plentiful, glorious and powerful : *God hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.* Note, 4. The nature and quality of that salvation and deliverance, which the Son of God came to accomplish for us. Not a temporal deliverance, as the Jews expected, from the power of the Romans ; but spiritual, from the hands of sin and Satan, death and hell ; his design was to purchase a spiritual freedom and liberty for us, *that we might be enabled to serve him without fear ;* that is, without the servile and offending fear of a slave, but with the dutiful and ingenuous fear of a child : and this in holiness and righteousness ; that is, in the duties of the first and second table, *all the days of our life.* Learn hence, That believers, who were slaves of Satan, are by Christ made God's free-men. 2dly, That as such, they owe God a service, a willing, cheerful, and delightful, service, without fear ; and a constant, persevering service all the days of their life : *that, we being delivered out of the hands, &c.* Note, 5. The source and fountain from which this glorious Saviour and gracious salvation did arise and spring ; namely, from the mercy and faithfulness of God ; *To perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham.* Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, the mercy of mercies, was graciously promised, and faithfully performed, by God to his church and people. Christ was a free and full mercy : a suitable, a seasona-

ble, and a satisfying, mercy; an incomparable, unsearchable, and everlasting, mercy; which God graciously promised in the beginning of time, and faithfully performed in the fulness of time. Thus far this hymn of Zachary respects the Messiah. Observe, 4. How he next turns himself to this child, and propheties concerning him: *And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, &c.* Where note, 1. The nature of his office: *Thou shalt be a prophet*; not a common and ordinary one, but a prophet of the highest rank; the messenger of the Lord of hosts. A prophet thou shalt be, and more than a prophet. Note, 2. As the nature of his office, so the quality of his work: *Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his way*; thou shalt be an herald and harbinger to the most High, thou shalt go before the face of the Messiah, and by thy severe reproofs, and powerful exhortations, shalt prepare his way before him, and make men fit and ready to receive this mighty Saviour. Thou, child, shalt be as the morning star, to foretell the glorious arising of this Sun of righteousness. Learn hence, 1. That it is the highest honour and dignity to serve Christ in the quality and relation of a prophet. 2. That it is the office and duty of the prophets of Christ to prepare and make fit the hearts of men to receive and embrace him. Observe, 5. That Zachary having spoken a few words concerning his son, he returns instantly to celebrate the praises of our Saviour, comparing him to the rising sun, which shined forth in the brightness of his gospel, to enlighten the dark corners of the world: *Through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness.* Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ is that true Sun of righteousness, which in the fulness of time did spring from on high to visit a lost and undone world. 2. That the great errand of Christ's coming into the world, and the particular end of his appearing in the flesh, was *to give light to them that sit in darkness.* 3. That it was nothing less than infinite mercy, and bowels of compassion, in God and Christ, which inclined him to come from on high to visit them that sit in darkness. "Through the tender bowels of mercy in our God, whereby his own and only Son sprung from on high to visit us here below, who sat in darkness and the shadow of death; and to guide our feet

into the way that leads to everlasting peace."

80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

Here we have a short account of John's private life before he entered upon his public ministry, which was at thirty years of age: *He grew*, that is, in bodily stature, and *waxed strong in spirit*: that is, in the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which increased with his age, and showed themselves in him every day more and more. *And he was in the deserts*: that is, the mountainous country of Judea, where he was born, till the time of his preaching to and amongst the Jews; not that he lived like an hermit, recluse from all society with men, but contented himself to continue in an obscure privacy, till called forth to promulge and preach the gospel: and when that time was come, John leaves the hill-country, and enters with resolution and unwearied diligence upon his public ministry; teaching us, by his example, that when we are fit and ripe for public service, we should no less willingly leave our obscurity, than we took the benefit of it for our preparation. John abode *in the deserts, till his showing unto Israel*; that is, till the time of his setting forth to execute his office among the Jews.

## CHAP. II.

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Beth-lehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swad-



ding-clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The conclusion of the former chapter acquainted us with the birth of John the Baptist; the beginning of this chapter relates the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the remarkable circumstances which did attend it. And here we have observable, 1. The place where he was born: not at Nazareth, but at *Bethlehem*, according to the prediction of the prophet Micah, chap. v. 2. *And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.* We may suppose, that the Blessed Virgin little thought of changing her place, but to have been delivered of her holy burden at Nazareth, where it was conceived. Her house at Nazareth was honoured by the presence of the angel; yea, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost: that house there, we may suppose, was most satisfactory to the Virgin's desire. But he that made choice of the womb where his Son should be conceived, it was fit he should also choose the place where his Son should be born. And this place, many hundred years before the nativity, was foretold should be Bethlehem. Observe, 2. How remarkable the providence of God was in bringing the Virgin up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, that Christ, as it was prophesied of him, might be born there. Augustus, the Roman emperor, to whom the nation of the Jews was now become tributary, puts forth a decree that all the Roman empire should have their names and families enrolled, in order to their being taxed. This edict required, that every family should repair to that city to which they did belong, to be enrolled and taxed there. Accordingly Joseph and Mary, being of the house and lineage of David, have recourse to Bethlehem, the city of David, where, according to the prophecy, the Messiah was to be born. Here note, How the wisdom of God overrules the actions of men, for higher or nobler ends than what they aimed at. The emperor's aim by this edict was to fill his coffers; God's end was to fulfil his prophecies. Observe, 3. How readily Joseph and Mary yielded obedience to the edict and decree of this heathen emperor. It was no less than four days' journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem: how just an excuse might the Virgin have pleaded for her absence! What

woman ever undertook so hazardous a journey, that was so near her delivery? And Joseph, no doubt, was sufficiently unwilling to draw her forth into so manifest an hazard. But as the emperor's command was peremptory, so their obedience was exemplary. We must not plead difficulty for withdrawing our obedience to supreme commands. How did our Saviour, even in the womb of his mother, yield homage to civil rulers and governors! The first lesson which Christ's example taught the world, was loyalty and obedience to the supreme magistrate. Observe, 4. After many weary steps, the Holy Virgin comes to Bethlehem, where every house is taken up by reason of the great confluence of people that came to be taxed; and there is no room for Christ but in a stable: the stable is our Lord's palace, the manger is his cradle. Oh, how can we be abased low enough for him that thus neglected himself for us! What an early indication was this, that our Lord's kingdom was not of this world! Yet some observe a mystery in all this: An inn is *domus publici juris*, not a private house, but open and free for all passengers, and the stable is the commonest place in the inn; to mind us, that he who was born there would be a common Saviour to high and low, noble and base, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile: called therefore so often, the Son of man; the design of his birth being the benefit of mankind.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.

Here we have the promulgation and first publishing of our Saviour's birth to the world: *The angel said unto the shepherds, I bring you glad tidings, a Saviour is born.* Where observe, 1. The messengers employed by God to publish the joyful news of a

Saviour's birth: the holy angels, heavenly messengers employed about an heavenly work. It is worth our notice, how serviceable the angels were to Christ upon all occasions, when he was here upon earth: an angel declares his conception; an host of angels publish his birth; in his temptation an angel strengthens him; in his agony an angel comforts him; at his resurrection an angel rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; at his ascension the angels attend him up to heaven; and at his second coming to judge the world he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. And great reason there is, that the angels should be thus officious in their attendance upon Christ, who is an head of confirmation to them, as he was an head of redemption to fallen man. Observe, 2. The persons to whom this joyful message of a Saviour's birth is first brought, and they are the shepherds: *The angel said unto the shepherds, Fear not.* 1. Because Christ the great Shepherd of his church was now come into the world. 2. Because he was of old promised unto shepherds, the old patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who by their occupation were shepherds. Observe, 3. The time when these shepherds had the honour of this revelation: it was not when they were asleep on their beds of idleness and sloth, but when they were lying abroad, and watching their flocks. The blessings of heaven usually meet us in the way of an honest and industrious diligence; whereas the idle are fit for nothing but temptation to work upon. If these shepherds had been snoring in their beds, they had no more seen angels, nor yet heard the news of a Saviour, than their neighbours. Observe, 4. The nature and quality of the message which the angel brought: it was a message of joy, a message of great joy, a message of great joy unto all people. For here was born a son, that son a prince, that prince a saviour, that saviour not a particular saviour of the Jews only, but an universal Saviour, whose salvation is to the ends of the earth. Well might the angel call it a message, or glad tidings, of great joy unto all people. Observe, 5. The ground and occasion of this joy, the foundation of all this good news which was proclaimed in the ears of a lost world; and that was, the birth of a Saviour: *Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* Hence learn, 1. That the incarnation and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his manifestation in

our flesh and nature, was and is matter of exceeding joy and rejoicing unto all people. 2. That the great end and design of our Lord's incarnation and coming into the world, was to be the Saviour of lost sinners:

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Although the birth of our blessed Saviour was published by one angel, yet it is celebrated by an host of angels; a whole choir of angels chaunt forth the praises of Almighty God, upon this great and joyful occasion. Here observe, 1. The singers. 2. The song itself. The singers of this heavenly anthem are the holy angels; called *an host*, partly for their number, and partly for their order. Where learn, 1. The goodness and sweet disposition of these blessed spirits, in whose bosom that cankered passion of envy has no place; if it had, there was never such an occasion to stir it up as now: but heaven admits of no such passion; envy is a native of hell, 'tis the smoke of the bottomless pit, the character and temper of the apostate spirits; these grieve at the happiness of man as much as the angels rejoice. O ye blessed angels, what did these tidings concern you, that ruined mankind should be taken again into favour? whereas those of your own host, which fell likewise, remained still in that gulph of perdition into which their sin had plunged them, without either hope of mercy, or possibility of recovery! The less we repine at the good, and the more we rejoice at the happiness of others, the more like we are to the holy angels; yea, the more we resemble God himself. Learn, 2. Did the angels thus joy and rejoice for us? Then what joy ought we to express for ourselves? Had we the tongue of angels, we could not sufficiently chaunt forth the praises of our Redeemer. Eternity itself would be too short to spend in the rapturous contemplation of redeeming mercy. Observe, 3. The anthem or song itself, which begins with a doxology, *Glory be to God in the highest*; that is, Let God in the highest heavens be glorified by the angels that dwell on high. The angelical choir excite themselves, and all the host of angels, to give glory to God for these wonderful tidings; as if they had said, "Let the power, the wisdom, the goodness, and mercy of God,

be acknowledged and revered by all the host of heaven for ever and ever." Next to the doxology follows a gratulation ; Glory be to God in the highest, *for there is peace on earth, and good will towards men*. The birth of Christ has brought a peace of reconciliation betwixt God and man upon earth, and also a peace of amity and concord betwixt man and man, and is therefore to be celebrated with acclamations of joy.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Several particulars are here observable ; as, 1. That the shepherds no sooner heard the news of a Saviour, but they ran to Bethlehem to seek him ; and though it was at midnight, yet they delayed not to go. Those that left their beds to attend their flocks, now leave their flocks to inquire after their Saviour. Learn thence, That a gracious soul no sooner hears where Christ is, but instantly makes out after him, and judges no earthly comfort too dear to be left and forsaken for him. These shepherds show, That they preferred their Saviour before their sheep. Observe, 2. These shepherds having found Christ themselves, do make him known to others, ver. 17. *When they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child*. Learn, That such as have found Christ to their comfort, and tasted that the Lord is gracious to themselves, cannot but recommend him to the love

and admiration of others. Observe, 3. What effect this relation had upon the generality of people that heard it ; it wrought in them amazement and astonishment, but not faith ; *The people wondered, but not believed*. 'Tis not the hearing of Christ with the hearing of the ear, nor the seeing of Christ with the sight of the outward eye : neither the hearing of his doctrine, nor the sight of his miracles will work divine faith in the soul, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit : the one may make us marvel, but the other makes us believe : *All that heard it wondered at these things*. Lastly note, The effect which these things had upon Mary, quite different from what they had upon the common people : *they wondered, she pondered* ; the things that affected their heads, influenced her heart : *She kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart*.

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Two things are here observable, 1. Our Saviour's circumcision, and the name given him at his circumcision. There was no impurity in the Son of God, and yet he is circumcised, and baptized also, though he had neither filth nor foreskin, which wanted either the circumcising knife or the baptismal water, yet he condescends to be both circumcised and baptized ; thereby showing, that as he was made of a woman, so he would be made under the law, which he punctually observed to a tittle. And accordingly, he was not only circumcised, but circumcised the eighth day, as the ceremonial law required : and thus our Lord fulfilled all righteousness, Matt. iii. 15. Observe, 2. The name given at our Saviour's circumcision : *His name was called Jesus* : that is, a Saviour ; *he bring to save his people from their sins*, Matt. i. 21. The great end of Christ's coming into the world was to save persons from the punishment and power of their sins. Had he not saved us from our sins, we must have died in our sins, and died for our sins, and that eternally. Never let us then sit down desponding, either under the guilt, or under the power of our sins ; and conclude, that they are either so great

that they cannot be forgiven, or so strong that they can never be overcome.

22 And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; 23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord; Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) 24 And to offer a sacrifice, according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.

A twofold act of obedience doth the Holy Virgin here perform to two ceremonial laws, the one concerning the purification of women, after child-birth, the other concerning the presenting the male-child before the Lord. The law concerning the purification of women we have recorded, *Lev. xii.* Where the time mentioned for the woman's purification is set down; namely, after a male-child *forty days*; after a female, *fourscore days*; after which time she was to bring a *lamb of a year old* for a burnt-offering, in case she was a person of ability; or a *pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons*, in case of extreme poverty. Now as to the Virgin's purification, observe, 1. That no sooner was she able and allowed to walk, but she travels to the temple. Where note, That she visited God's house at Jerusalem, before her own house at Nazareth. Learn thence, That such women whom God has blessed with safety of deliverance, if they make not their first visit to the temple of God to offer up their praises and thanksgivings there, they are strangers to the Virgin's piety and devotion. Observe, 2. Another act of Mary's obedience to the ceremonial law: she presented her child at Jerusalem to the Lord. But how durst the blessed Virgin carry her holy babe to Jerusalem, into Herod's mouth? It was but a little before that Herod sought the young child's life to destroy it; yet the Virgin sticks not, in obedience to the commands of God, to carry him to Jerusalem. Learn hence, That no apprehension of dangers, either imminent or approaching, either at hand or afar off, ought to hinder us from performing our duty to Almighty God. We ought not to neglect a certain duty, to escape an uncertain danger. Ob-

serve farther, As the obedience, so the humility, of the Holy Virgin, in submitting to the law for purifying of uncleanness: for thus she might have pleaded, "What need have I of purging, who did not conceive in sin? Other births are from men, but mine is from the Holy Ghost, who is purity itself. Other women's children are under the law, mine is above the law." But, like the mother of him whom it behoved to fulfil all righteousness, she dutifully fulfils the law of God without quarrelling or disputing. Observe, lastly, As the exemplary humility, so the great poverty, of the Holy Virgin; she has not a lamb, but comes with her two doves to God. Her offering declares her penury. The best are sometimes the poorest, seldom the wealthiest: Yet none are so poor, but God expects an offering from them: he looks for somewhat from every one, not from every one alike. The providence of God it is that makes difference in person's abilities, but his pleasure will make no difference in the acceptation; *Where there is a willing mind, it shall be accepted according to what a person hath*, 2 Cor. viii. 12.

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. 26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, 28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

No sooner was our Saviour brought into the temple and presented to the Lord by his holy parents, but in springs old Simeon, a pious and devout man, who had a revelation from God, that he should not die until he had with his bodily eyes seen the promised Messiah. Accordingly, *he takes up the child Jesus in his arms*, but hugs him faster by his faith, than by his feeble arms, and with ravishment of heart praises God for the sight of his Saviour, whom he calls *the Consolation of*

*Israel*; that is, the Messiah, whom the Israel of God had long looked and waited for, and now took comfort and consolation in. Note here, 1. How God always performs his promises to his children with wonderful advantages. Simeon had a revelation that he should not die until he had seen Christ; now he not only sees him, but feels him too; he not only has him in his eye, but holds him in his hands. Though God stays long before he fulfils his promises, he certainly comes at last with a double reward for our expectation. Note, 2. That the coming of the Messiah in the fulness of time, and his appearing in our flesh and nature, was and is matter of unspeakable consolation to the Israel of God. And now that he is come, let us live by faith in him, as the foundation of all comfort and consolation both in life and death. Alas! what are all other consolations besides this, and without this? They are impotent and insufficient consolations, they are dying and perishing consolations; nay, they are sometimes afflictive and distressing consolations. The bitterness accompanying them, is sometimes more than the sweetness that is tasted in them; but in Christ, who is *the consolation of Israel*, there is light without darkness, joy without sorrow, all consolation without any mixture of discomfort.

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. 33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

These words are a sweet canticle, or swan-like song, of old Simeon, a little before his dissolution. He had seen the Messiah before by faith, now by sight, and wishes to have his eyes closed, that he might see nothing after this desirable sight. It is said of some Turks, that after they have seen Mahomet's tomb, they put out their eyes, that they may never defile them after they have seen so glorious an object: Thus did old Simeon desire to see no more of this world, after he had seen Christ the Saviour of the world, but sues for his dismissal; *Lord, let thy servant depart*. Note here, 1. That a good man having served

his generation, and God in his generation, faithfully, is weary of the world, and willing to be dismissed from it. 2. That the death of a good man is nothing else but a quiet and peaceable departure; it is a departure *in peace* to the God of peace. 3. That it is only a spiritual sight of Christ by faith that can welcome the approach of death, and render it an object desirable to the christian's choice; he only that can say, *My eyes have seen thy salvation*, will be able to say, *Lord, let thy servant depart*. Observe, farther, Holy Simeon having declared the faithfulness of God to himself in the gift of Christ, next he celebrates the mercy of God in bestowing this invaluable gift of a Saviour upon the whole world. The world consists of Jews and Gentiles; Christ is a *light* to the one, and the *glory* of the other. A light to the blind and dark Gentiles, and the glory of the renowned church of the Jews; the Messiah being promised to them, born and bred up with them, living amongst them, preaching his doctrine to them, and working his miracles before them: and thus was Christ *the glory of his people Israel*.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; 35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Two things are here observed, Simeon's blessing, and Simeon's prediction; *He blessed them*: that is, the parents and the child Jesus: not authoritatively, but prophetically, declaring how God would bless them. His prediction is twofold, 1. Concerning Christ. 2. Concerning his mother. Concerning Christ, Simeon declares, that he should be *for the rise of many in Israel*: namely, all such as should embrace and obey his doctrine, and imitate and follow his example: and *for the fall of others*; that is, shall bring punishment and ruin upon all obdurate and impenitent sinners: and a *sign to be spoken against*: that is, he shall be as a mark for obstinate sinners to set themselves against. Christ himself, when here in the world, was a *stone of stumbling* and a *rock of offence*, to the men of the world, *enduring the*

*contradiction of sinners against himself*, both the virulence of their tongues, and the violence of their hands. Doubtless God's first design in sending his Son into the world was, *that through him the world might be saved*, John iii. 16. But to such persons, whose minds had no relish for spiritual things, he became accidentally a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. Secondly, Concerning the mother of Christ, Simeon declares that the sight of her son's bitter sufferings would, like a sword, pierce her heart; for though he might be born, yet should he not die, without the pains of his mother; as if the throes suffered by other women at the birth were reserved for her to endure at the death of her son. The sufferings of the holy Jesus on the cross, were as a sword or dagger at the heart of the Holy Virgin, and she suffered with him both as a tender mother, and as a sympathizing member of his body: yea, suffered martyrdom after him, saith Epiphanius.

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; 37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And she coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Simeon is seconded by Anna, a prophetess; she also declares that the child Jesus was the promised and expected Messiah: and thus Christ was proclaimed in the temple by two heralds of different sexes. Concerning this aged woman, Anna, it is said, that *she departed not from the temple night nor day*; not that she lived and lodged there, but by her never departing from, understand her daily repairing to, the temple. That which is often done, is said in scripture to be always done. We are said to do a thing continually when we do it seasonably: thus we pray continually, when we pray as often as duty requires us to pray. Learn hence, That such duties as a christian performs out of conscience, he will perform with constancy and perseverance; nature will have her good moods, but grace is

steady. The devotions of a pious soul, like Anna's, are as constant, but more frequent, than the returns of day and night.

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. 40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Here we see the truth and reality of Christ's human nature: he grew as we do, from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth and manhood. To his divine nature no accession or addition could be made, for that which is infinite cannot increase. The Deity was infinite in Christ, so was not the humanity, but capable of additions: and accordingly, as Christ grew up in the stature of his body, the faculties of his mind increased, through the grace and power of God's Spirit upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

Observe here, The persons making this yearly journey to Jerusalem; our Saviour's parents and himself. 1. Joseph, who is called Christ's father, not that he was his natural father, for Christ had no father upon earth: but Joseph was his reputed and supposed father, his nursing father, who by the appointment of God took a fatherly care of him; and his father-in-law, being husband to Mary. 2. Mary, the mother of Christ, went up to Jerusalem, with her husband and her son: God commanded only the males to go up to Jerusalem, the weaker sex were excused; but the Holy Virgin, well knowing the spiritual profit of that long journey, would not stay at home. Such as will go no farther than they are dragged in religious exercises, are strangers to the Virgin's piety and devotion. But, 3. The child Jesus in his minority goes up with his parents to this holy solemnity, thereby no doubt intending our instruction, when we are young to give God an early possession of our souls, to consecrate the virgin operations of our minds to him, and in our youth to keep close to the worship and service of God, when we are so importunately courted by the world. Observe farther, This holy family came

not to look at the feast and be gone, but they duly staid out all the appointed time. Joseph's calling, and the Virgin's household business, could neither keep them at home, nor hasten them home before the public duties in the temple were despatched and ended. All worldly business must give place to divine offices, and we must attend God's services to the end, except we will depart unblest. Observe, lastly, The constant returns of their devotion : *They went up to Jerusalem every year.* No difficulties, no discouragements, could hinder their attendance. Though it is no certain evidence of the truth of grace to frequent the public assemblies, yet it is an infallible sign of the want of grace customarily to neglect them.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem ; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. 44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey ; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance. 45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

The service of the temple being ended, they return home to Nazareth. Religious duties are not to be attended to the prejudice and neglect of our particular callings. God calls us, as well from his house as to his house. They are much mistaken, who think God is pleased with nothing but devotion : he that says, *Be fervent in spirit serving the Lord*, says also, *Be not slothful in business.* Piety and industry must keep pace with one another ; God is as well pleased with our return to Nazareth, as with our going up to Jerusalem. Observe farther, Though Joseph and Mary returned home, the child Jesus, unknown to them, stays behind. Their back was no sooner turned upon the temple, but his face was towards it ; Christ had business in that place which his parents knew not of. They missing him, *seek him in the company*, concluding him with their *kinsfolk and acquaintance.* From whence we may gather, That the parents of Christ knew him to be of a sweet and sociable, of a free and conversative, not of a sullen and morose, disposition. They did not suspect

him to be wandering in the fields or deserts, but when they missed him, sought him among their kinsfolk : had he not wanted to converse formerly with them, he had not now been sought amongst them. Our blessed Saviour, when on earth, did not take pleasure in a wild retiredness, in a froward austerity, but in a mild affability, and amiable conversation ; and herein also his example is very instructive to us.

46 And it came to pass, that, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. 47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

Observe here, 1. The place where the child Jesus is found, *In the temple* : where could there be a more likely place to find the Son of God, than in the house of his Father ? No wonder that his parents found him there ; but that they went not first to seek him there. Observe, 2. At twelve years old our Saviour disputes in the temple with the doctors of the law : never had those great rabbies heard the voice of such a tutor. Thus, in our Saviour's nonage, he gives us a proof of his proficiency ; even as the spring shows us what we may hope for of the tree in summer. Our Saviour discovered his accomplishments by degrees : had his perfections appeared all at once, they had rather dazzled, than delighted, the eyes of the beholders ; even as the sun would confound all eyes, should it appear at its first rising in its full strength. Christ could now have taught all those great rabbies the deep mysteries of God ; but being not yet called by his Father to be a public teacher, he contents himself to hear with diligence, and to ask with modesty. Learn hence, That parts and abilities for the ministerial function are not sufficient to warrant our undertaking of it without a regular call. Christ himself would not run, nor not on his heavenly Father's errand, before he was sent, much less should we.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed : and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

Without doubt it was impossible to express the sorrow of the Holy Virgin's soul, when all the search of three days could

bring them no tidings of their holy child. How did she blame her eyes for once looking off this object of her love, and spend both days and nights in a passionate bemoaning of her loss! O blessed Saviour, who can miss thee, and not mourn for thee! Never any soul conceived thee by faith, but was apprehensive of thy worth, and sensible of thy want: what comforts are we capable of, while we want thee? and what relish can we taste in an earthly delight without thee?

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

Observe here, That Christ blames not his parents for their solicitous care of him, but shows them how able he was to live without any dependency upon them and their care; and also to let them understand, that higher respects had called him away; that as he had meat to eat, so he had work to do, which they knew not of. For, says he, *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* As if he had said, "Although I owe respect to you as my natural parents, yet my duty to my heavenly Father must be preferred. I am about his work, promoting his glory, and propagating his truth." We have also a Father in heaven. O how good it is to steal away from our earthly distractions that we may employ ourselves immediately in his service! that when the world makes enquiry after us, we may say, as our Saviour did before us, *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.  
51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

The most material passage of our Saviour's life for the first twelve years is here recorded; namely, his disputing with the doctors in the temple: how he spent the next eighteen years, namely, till he was thirty, the scripture doth not mention. It is here said, that he lived with, and was

subject to, his parents, obeying their commands, and, as it is believed, following their employment, working upon the trade of a carpenter, as was observed, *Mark vi. 3.* Doubtless he did not live an idle life; and why should he that did not abhor the Virgin's womb, a stable, and a manger, be supposed to abhor the works of an honest vocation? Observe farther, What a singular pattern is here for children to imitate and follow, in their subjection to their parents. If the greatest and highest of mortals think themselves above their parents' commands, our Saviour did not so; he paid homage to the womb that bare him, and to his supposed father that provided for him. Let a person be never so high above others, he is still below and inferior to his parents. Jesus dwelt with his parents, and *was subject unto them.* Observe, lastly, A further evidence of our Saviour's humanity, with respect to his human nature, which consisted of body and soul: he did grow and improve, his body in stature, his soul in wisdom; and he became every day a more eminent and illustrious person in the eyes of all, being highly in favour both with *God and man.* Vain then is the conclusion of the Socinians from this text, that Christ could not be God; because God cannot wax strong in spirit, or increase in wisdom, as Christ is here said to do; for God's perfections are infinite, and will admit of no increase. Whereas it is plain, that this increase here attributed to Christ in age and stature, respects his humanity: the wisdom and endowments of his human mind were capable of increase, though his divine perfections were absolutely perfect. So glad are these men of the least shadow of a text, that may cloud the divinity of the Son of God.

### CHAP. III.

**N**OW in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, 2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.



The two foregoing chapters give us an account of the birth of our Saviour Christ, and of John the Baptist. The evangelist now leaving the history of our blessed Saviour for eighteen years, namely, till he was thirty years old, (the Holy Ghost having thought fit to conceal that part of our Saviour's private life from our knowledge,) he begins this chapter with a relation of the Baptist's ministry, acquainting us with the time when, and the place where, and the doctrine which, the Baptist taught. Observe, 1. The time described when St. John began his public ministry, namely, when Tiberius was emperor, and Annas and Caiaphas high priests. Observe, 2. In the fifteenth year of Tiberius, when the Jews were entirely under the power of the Romans, who set four governors over them, called Tetrarchs, so named from their ruling over a fourth part of the kingdom. From hence the Jews might have observed, had not prejudice blinded their eyes, that the sceptre being thus departed from Judah, according to Jacob's prophecy, *Gen. xlix. Shiloh, or the Messiah, was now come.* Again, the time when St. John began his ministry was when Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. Under the law there were three sorts of ministers that attended the service of the temple, namely, priests, Levites, and Nethinims; over these the high priest was chief, who by God's command, was to be the first-born of Aaron's family. But how came two high priests here, seeing God never appointed but one at a time? In answer to this, say some, The power and covetousness of the Romans put in high priests at pleasure to officiate for gain. Say others, the high priest was allowed his assistant or deputy, who in case of his pollution and sickness, did officiate in his place. But that which we may profitably observe from hence, is this, The exactness and faithfulness of this historian, St. Luke, in relating the circumstances of our Saviour's nativity, and the Baptist's ministry. That the truth might evidently appear, he is exact in recording the time.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make

his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth: 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Observe here, 1. The place where the Baptist exercised his ministry: in the wilderness of Judea, where were some cities and villages, though thinly inhabited. Note here, The great humility of the Baptist in preaching in an obscure place, and to a small handful of people. Jerusalem, some might think, was a fitter place for so celebrated a preacher; but God had called him to preach in the wilderness, and there he opens his commission. Learn, That the most eminent of God's ministers must be content to execute their office, and exercise their ministry, where God calls them, be the place never so mean and obscure, and the people never so rude and barbarous. In the place where God by his providence fixes us, we must abide, till he that called us thither, removes us thence. And this was the Baptist's case here. He leaves the wilderness at God's command, and comes to more inhabited places: *He came into the country about Jordan, preaching.* It is not only lawful, but a necessary duty, for the ministers of God to remove from one place and people to another, provided their call be clear, their way plain, the good of souls their motive, and the glory of God their end. Observe, 2. The doctrine which the Baptist preached: namely, *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins:* that is, the doctrine of baptism, which sealeth remission of sins to the party baptized. Learn hence, That the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is the indispensable duty of every gospel minister. John the Baptist preached it, our Saviour preached it, his apostles preached it: *They went out every where preaching that men should repent.* Till we are in a state of sinless perfection, the doctrine of repentance must be preached unto us, and practised by us. Observe, 3. The motive and inducement which prompted the Baptist to this duty; which was, to fulfil the prophecies that went before of him: *As it is written in the book of the prophecies, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight: every*

*valley shall be filled, &c.* Where note, 1. The title given to John the Baptist : a *Voice*, a crying voice. This implies both his vehemency and earnestness, and also his freedom and boldness, in delivering his message ; when a minister's own heart is warmly affected with what he preaches, he may hope to affect the hearts of others. Note, 2. The sum and substance of what he cried : *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*, &c. that is, make yourselves ready to receive the Messiah, to embrace and entertain his doctrine. As loyal subjects, when their prince is coming near their city, remove every thing out of the way that may hinder his progress ; all annoyances and all impediments ; in like manner the preparatory work of the gospel upon the hearts of sinners, lies in pulling down mountains, and filling up valleys ; that is, in humbling the proud hearts of sinners, puffed up, as the Pharisees were, with a conceit of their own righteousness, who would be their own saviours, and not beholden to Christ, and to his free grace, for salvation. Learn hence, 1. That man's heart is naturally very unfit to receive and entertain the Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy doctrine : we have naturally no fitness, no inclination, nor disposition, to believe in him, or submit unto him. 2. That if ever we design to entertain Christ in our hearts, we must first prepare and make ready our hearts for the receiving and embracing of him. For though the *preparation of the heart be from the Lord*, yet he requires the exercise of our faculties, and the use of our endeavours ; he prepares our hearts, by enabling us to prepare our own hearts, by getting a sight of the evil of sin, and a sense of our misery without Christ ; an *hungering* desire after him, and a lively faith in him. God does not work upon man, as masons work upon a stone ; what he doth in us and for us, he doth it by us ; he works by setting us to work ; therefore says the holy Baptist, *prepare ye the way of the Lord, make, &c.* The act of endeavour is ours, the aid and assistance is God's. Observe lastly, The encouragement which the Baptist gives to persons to prepare the way of the Lord : *For, says he, all flesh shall see the salvation of God ; that is, now is the time that all persons, Jews and Gentiles, may see the Author of salvation, whom God has promised to the world ; and may by faith be made partakers of that salvation which the Messiah shall purchase for them, and in his*

gospel tender to them. The great end of Christ's coming into the world, was to purchase salvation for all flesh willing to be saved by him.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers ! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ? 8 Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance ; and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

St. Matthew, chap. iii, 7, 8. says, that the Baptist spake these words to the Pharisees and Sadducees, whom he gives, first, a quick and cutting compellation, *O generation of vipers* ; then a sharp and severe reprehension, *Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ?* and, last of all, a seasonable exhortation, *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.* As if he had said, "O ye Pharisees, and worst of men, I perceive by your coming hither, somebody has alarmed you with the notice of that dreadful vengeance that is coming upon this generation ; to prevent which, you pretend repentance of your sins : but let me see by your actions that you are not only demure, but sincere penitents ; let me see the fruits of your repentance in the daily course of your conversation." Learn here, 1. That the condition of proud Pharisees, pretending and false-hearted hypocrites, though very dangerous, yet is not hopeless and desperate ; and their salvation, though the worst of men, must not be despaired of. St. John reproves them for their sins, but yet encourages their repentance. 2. That sincere repentance is not a barren thing, but does constantly bring forth fruits answerable to its nature : as faith without works, so repentance without fruits, is dead also. The genuine fruits of repentance, are humility of heart, and holiness of life. Observe, lastly, The cautionary direction which he gives to these hypocrites not to rest in their external privileges : *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father ; glory not in this, that you are the only visible church that God has upon earth, for God can, out of the obdurate Gentile world, raise up a people to himself, take them into*

covenant with himself, and cast you out. Learn hence, 1. That men are exceeding apt to boast of, and glory in, their external privileges, and to place religion most in those things wherein God places it least. How did the Jews glory in their fleshly descent from Abraham, as if God was tied to Abraham's line, and could have no people if he had not them for his people? 2. That it is a vain thing to expect exemption from the judgments of God, because of outward privileges enjoyed by us. If we be not born again of the Spirit, it will avail us nothing to be born of Abraham's flesh: if Abraham's faith be not found in our hearts, it will be of no advantage to us that Abraham's blood is running in our veins: *Think not to say, We have Abraham to our father.*

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

St. John having preached the doctrine of repentance in the foregoing verses, he backs it with a powerful argument in this verse, drawn from the certainty and severity of that judgment which should come upon them, if they continued their sins: *Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree.* Learn, 1. That it is not unsuitable for gospel-preachers to press repentance and holiness of life upon their hearers, from arguments of terror: John does it here, and Christ elsewhere. 2. That those whose hearts are not pierced with the sword of God's word, shall certainly be cut down and destroyed by the axe of his judgments. Observe farther, That forasmuch as the sin here specified is a sin of omission, *every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit*, as well as that which bringeth forth evil fruit, *is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* We learn that sins of omission are certainly damning, as well as sins of commission. The neglects of duty are as dangerous and damnable as the acts of sin. Such trees as stand in God's orchard, the church, and bring forth no good fruit, are marked out as fuel for the devil's fire.

10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?

11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none;

and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

The Baptist having pressed his hearers to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, here they enquire of him what fruits they should bring forth? he tells them, first the fruits of charity and mercy: *He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none.* This is not to be understood strictly, as if the command required us to give the clothes off our back to every one that wanted them: but it directs those that have the things of this life in abundance, to distribute and communicate to those that are in want. Learn hence, That an extensive liberality, and a diffusive charity in distributing such things as we can well spare towards the relief of others' necessities, is an excellent fruit of repentance, and a good proof and evidence of the truth and sincerity of it: *Let him that hath two coats impart to him that hath none.* Note, That the Baptist here doth not make it unlawful for a man to have two coats, but means only, that he that has one coat, which his brother wants, and he at present doth not, should rather give it him, than suffer him to be in want of it. Teaching us, That it is not lawful to abound in those things which our brother wants, when we have sufficient both to relieve him and our necessities.

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? 13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

The publicans were persons employed by the Romans to gather the tax of tribute among the Jews, who were now tributaries to the Romans, and paid them a public revenue. These publicans were great oppressors, exacting more than was the emperor's due; therefore we find the publicans and sinners so often joined together in the gospel. These men enquiring what fruits of repentance they should bring forth, St. John directs them to acts of justice: *Exact not.* Where note, 1. That acts of justice and righteousness, as well as of charity and mercy, are real fruits of sincere repentance. Observe, 2. John doth not condemn the office, but cautions the officer. If magistrates may impose taxes, they may doubtless appoint officers to collect those taxes: christian charity then must always teach us to distinguish betwixt the calling and the crime. We must not censure any office,

either in church or state, for the sake of their mal-administration who are employed in that office.

14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Devolence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

Observe here, What a general resort there was of all sorts of persons to John's ministry; Pharisees, Sadducees, publicans, soldiers; these last here enquire of him, What they should do to gain acceptance with God? He answers, *Do no violence, defraud no man of his own* by false accusation, but be content with the allowance assigned you for your maintenance. Where it is, 1. Strongly supposed that soldiers are insolent oppressors, making no conscience or injustice, false accusation, and violent oppression. Yet, 2. The office and employment of a soldier is not condemned, but regulated; he does not bid them cast away their arms, abandon war, appear no more as military men in the field; but manage their employment inoffensively. Whence we learn, That in some cases, and under some circumstances, for christians to make war is both lawful and necessary. To make a war lawful, there is required a lawful authority, a righteous cause, an honourable aim and intention, and a just and righteous manner of prosecution, without vanity and ostentation, without cruelty and oppression. Courage and compassion on the one hand, and cowardice and cruelty on the other hand, do frequently accompany one another.

15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; 16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: 17 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

Observe here, 1. How the extraordinariness of John the Baptist's person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, and the exemplariness of his conversation, drew all persons to an admiration of him; inasmuch that they began to think within themselves, whether he were not the Messiah himself. He plainly tells them he was not, but only his servant, his harbinger and forerunner. Observe, 2. The high opinion which John had of Christ, *He is mightier than I*; that is, a person of greater authority, dignity, and excellency, than myself. From whence may be gathered, That though Christ was man, he was more than man, even very God, equal with the Father: for John himself was the greatest of them that were born of women, *Matt. xi. 11.* yet, says John, Christ is mightier than I. How so? In regard of the dignity of his person, being both God and man? *He that cometh after me is mightier than I.* Observe, 3. The humble and low estimation that the holy Baptist had of himself: *His shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose*: a proverbial speech, implying that he was unworthy to do the lowest offices, and meanest services for Christ. Lord, how well does humility of mind, an humble apprehension, and a low opinion of themselves, become the messengers and ministers of Christ! John was a man of eminent abilities, yet of exemplary humility; he thought himself unworthy to unloose Christ's shoe. Observe, 4. John does not only declare the dignity of Christ's person, but the excellency of his office; *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.* As if he had said, "I only wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of his Holy Spirit, which is as fire in the effects of it, purifying the hearts of his people from sin, and consuming their lusts and corruptions; yet at the same time having fiery indignation, and flaming judgments, to destroy and burn up impenitent sinners like dry stubble." Observable it is in scripture, that Christ is represented by one and the same metaphor of fire, in a way of comfort to his children, and in a way of terror to his enemies; he is fire unto both. He sits in the hearts of his people as a refiner's fire; he is amongst his enemies as a consuming fire: a fire for his church to take comfort in, a fire for his enemies to perish by. Observe, lastly, How the holy Baptist compares our Saviour to an husbandman, and the Jewish church to a barn-

floor; the office of an husbandman is to thresh, fan, and winnow, his corn, separating it from the chaff, preserving the one, and consuming the other. Observe, 1. That the church is Christ's floor. 2. That this floor Christ will purge, and that thoroughly. 3. That the word of Christ is the fan in his hand, by and with which he will thoroughly purge his floor. The church is compared to a floor, upon the account of that mixture which is in the church. In a floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed. Thus in the church there has been, there is, and ever will be, a mixture of good and bad, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere christians: but this floor Christ will purge; purge it, but not break it up; purge out its corruptions, but not destroy its essence and existence: and the fan in Christ's hand, with which he will purge his floor, is his holy word, accompanied with the wing of discipline. The fan detects and discovers the chaff, and the wing dissipates and scatters it; and by the help of both the floor is purged: *His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge, &c.*

18 And many other things, in his exhortation, preached he unto the people. 19 But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20 Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

Observe here, 1. In John the Baptist the character of a zealous and faithful minister of the gospel: he is one that deals plainly, and durst tell the greatest persons of their faults. Herod, though a king, is reproved by him for his adultery and incest. The crown and sceptre of Herod could not daunt the faithful messenger of God. There ought to meet in the ministers of Christ both courage and impartiality; courage in fearing no faces, and impartiality in sparing no sins. Observe, 2. Who it was that imprisoned and beheaded the holy Baptist: Herod a king. How sad is it when kings, who should be nursing-fathers to the church, do prove the bloody butchers of the prophets of God. Many of the severest persecutions which the ministers of God have fallen under, have been occasioned by their telling great men of their crimes. Men in power are impatient of reproof, and imagine

that their authority gives them a license to transgress. Observe, 3. The heinous aggravations of this sin in Herod: *He added this to all his other sins, that he shut up John in prison.* This evidenced him incorrigible and irreclaimable. John had preached before Herod, and Herod had heard John with some delight; but he had a darling lust, which occasioned his destruction. Learn hence, That hypocrites may hear the word with some pleasure, and do many things with some delight, but they have always some beloved lust that must be spared; they will neither part with it, nor bear reproof for it. Herod sticks not to cut off that head, whose tongue was so bold as to reprove him for his lusts.

21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened.

Observe, 1. The great condescension of Christ in seeking and submitting to the baptism of John. Christ, though John's Lord and Master, yet yields to be baptized of his servant and messenger. Observe, 2. The reasons why Christ would be baptized. 1. That by this rite he might enter himself into the society of christians, as he had before by circumcision entered into the society of the Jews. 2. That he might by his own baptism sanctify the ordinance of baptism unto us. 3. That thereby he might fulfil the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water, before they entered upon their office, as appears, *Erod. xxix.* 4. Observe, 3. How the duty of prayer accompanieth the ordinance of baptism: *Jesus being baptized, and praying.* Teaching us by his example to sanctify every ordinance and every action, with prayer. Christ, when he was baptized, he prayed; when he was tempted, he prayed; when he brake bread, he prayed; when he wrought miracles, he prayed; in his agony in the garden, he prayed; when he suffered on the cross, he prayed. What was the subject-matter of our Lord's prayer at this time is not expressed; but by what followed, namely, the heavens opening and the Holy Ghost descending, it is probably conjectured, that he prayed for some testimony to be given from heaven concerning himself, for it immediately follows;

22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove

upon him ; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son ; in thee I am well pleased.

Observe here, The solemn investing of Christ into his office, as Mediator, is attended with a threefold miracle ; namely, the opening of the heavens, the descending of the Holy Ghost, and God the Father's voice concerning the Son. *The heavens were opened* ; to show, that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us, by Christ's undertaking for us. Next, *The Holy Ghost descends like a dove upon our Saviour*. Here we have a proof and evidence of the blessed Trinity ; the Father speaks from heaven, the Son comes out of the water, and the Holy Ghost descends after the manner of a dove, hovering and overshadowing him. But why did the Holy Ghost now descend upon Christ ? First, For the designation of his person, to show that he was the person set apart for the work and office of a mediator. Secondly, For the unction and sanctification of his person for the performance of that office. Now was he anointed to be the king, priest, and prophet of his church. Lastly, We have here the *voice of God the Father*, pronouncing, 1. The nearness of Christ's relation : *This is my Son*. 2. The endearment of his person : *This is my beloved Son*. 3. The fruit and benefit of this near relation unto us : *In thee I am well pleased*. Learn hence, 1. That there is no possibility for any person to please God out of Christ ; neither our persons nor our performances can find acceptance with God, but only in and through him, and for his sake. 2. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the ground and cause of all that love and good will which God the Father sheweth to the sons of men. In Christ, God is well pleased with us as a reconciled Father ; out of him, a consuming fire : *Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased*.

23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as he was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,

At thirty years of age, the priests under the law entered upon their public office ; accordingly Christ stavs the full time prescribed by the law, before he undertakes his public ministry, and he gives the

reason for it, *Matt. iii. 15. That he might fulfil all righteousness* ; that is, the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required persons to be of that age, before they entered upon that office ; and also enjoined them to be baptized or washed in water, when they undertook their office. See *Exod. xxix. 4*. Learn hence, That whatever the law required in order to perfect righteousness, that Christ fulfilled in most absolute perfection, both in his own person, and also in the name of all believers. Observe farther, The title given to Joseph here : he is called the supposed father of Christ. Joseph was not his natural father, though so supposed by the Jews ; but he was his legal father, being married to the Virgin when our Saviour was born ; and he was his nursing father, that took care of him, and provided for him, though Christ sometimes showed both his parents, that, if he pleased, he could live without any dependence upon their care. See *Luke ii. 49*.

24 Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, 25 Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge, 26 Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda, 27 Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, 28 Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, 29 Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eli-ezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, 30 Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Elia-

kim, 31 Which was *the son* of Melea, which was *the son* of Menan, which was *the son* of Mattatha, which was *the son* of Nathan, which was *the son* of David, 32 Which was *the son* of Jesse, which was *the son* of Obed, which was *the son* of Booz, which was *the son* of Salmon, which was *the son* of Naasson, 33 Which was *the son* of Aminadab, which was *the son* of Aram, which was *the son* of Esrom, which was *the son* of Pharez, which was *the son* of Juda, 34 Which was *the son* of Jacob, which was *the son* of Isaac, which was *the son* of Abraham, which was *the son* of Thara, which was *the son* of Nachor, 35 Which was *the son* of Saruch, which was *the son* of Ragau, which was *the son* of Phalec, which was *the son* of Heber, which was *the son* of Sala, 36 Which was *the son* of Cainan, which was *the son* of Arphaxad, which was *the son* of Sem, which was *the son* of Noe, which was *the son* of Lamech, 37 Which was *the son* of Mathusala, which was *the son* of Enoch, which was *the son* of Jared, which was *the son* of Maleleel, which was *the son* of Cainan, 38 Which was *the son* of Enos, which was *the son* of Seth, which was *the son* of Adam, which was *the son* of God.

We find the genealogy of our blessed Saviour recorded by two evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke. His pedigree is set forth by St. Matthew from his father Joseph, by St. Luke from his mother Mary; the design of both is to prove him lineally descended from Abraham and David, and consequently the true and promised Messiah. St. Matthew, intending his history primarily for the Jews, proves him to be the son of Abraham and David, for their comfort. St. Luke, designing the information and comfort of the Gentiles, derives our Lord's pedigree from Adam, the common parent of mankind; to assure the Gentiles of their possibility of an interest in Christ, they being sons of Adam. Neither of these evangelists are strict and

accurate in enumerating every individual person; which should teach us not to be over-curious in scanning the parts of this genealogy, much less captiously to object against it, because of some seeming contradictions to it. For if the evangelists were not nice and critical in composing this genealogy, why should we be so in examining of it? Let us rather attend to the design of the Holy Ghost in writing of it, which was twofold. 1. For the honour of our Saviour as man, showing who were his noble and royal progenitors according to the flesh. 2. For the confirmation of our faith, touching the reality of our Saviour's incarnation. The scripture making mention of all his progenitors from the first man Adam, to his reputed father Joseph, we cannot reasonably doubt either of the truth of his human nature, or of the certainty of his being the promised Messiah. Hence we may learn, That the wisdom of God has taken all necessary care, and used all needful means, for satisfying the minds of all unprejudiced persons, touching the reality of Christ's human nature, and the certainty of his being the promised Messiah; for both these ends is our Saviour's genealogy, descent, and pedigree, recorded in holy scripture.

#### CHAP. IV.

AND Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

At the twenty-second verse of the foregoing chapter, we find the Holy Ghost descending in a bodily shape like a dove upon our Saviour; in this verse we find the extraordinary effects and fruits of the Holy Ghost's descent upon our Saviour: he was filled with all the gifts and graces of the blessed Spirit, to fit and furnish him for that ministerial service which he was now entering upon. But observable it is, that before our Saviour undertook the ministerial office, *he is led by the Spirit into the wilderness*, and there furiously assaulted with Satan's temptations. Temptation, meditation, and prayer, says Luther, make a minister: great temptations from Satan do fit us for greater services for God. And whereas it is said, that Christ was *led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil*: by the Spirit, we must

understand the Holy Spirit of God ; for the devil, I think, is never called the spirit, but has always a brand of reproach annexed, as the evil spirit, the unclean spirit, and the like. By his being *led by the Spirit*, (St Mark says, he was *drove* by the Spirit,) we may either understand a potent and efficacious persuasion, without any violent motion : or else, as the learned Dr. Lightfoot thinks, Christ was bodily caught up by the Holy Spirit into the air, and carried from Jordan, where he was baptized, into the wilderness, where he was tempted. God had put great honour upon Christ at his baptism, declaring him to be his well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased ; and the next news we hear, is the devil assaulting him with his temptations. Learn thence, That the more any are beloved of God, and dignified with more eminent testimonies of his favour, so much the more is the devil enraged, and maliciously bent against them.

2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing : and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

Observe here, How the divine power upheld Christ's human nature without food. What Moses did at the giving of the law, Christ doth at the beginning of the gospel, namely, *fast forty days and forty nights*. Christ hereby intended our admiration rather than our imitation ; or if our imitation, of the action only, not of the time. From this example of Christ we learn, That it is our duty, by fasting and prayer, to prepare ourselves for a conflict with our spiritual enemies. As Christ prepared himself, by fasting, to grapple with the tempter, so should we.

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

Observe here, 1. The occasion of the temptation. And, 2. The temptation itself. The occasion of the temptation was our Saviour's hunger and want of bread. Learn thence, That when God suffers any of his children to fall into want, and to be straitened for outward things, Satan takes a mighty advantage thereupon to tempt and assault them. Observe, 3. What it is he tempts our Saviour to ; it is the sin of distrust, to call in question his sonship ; *If thou be the Son of God*.

and then to distrust God's providence and care ; *Command that these stones be made bread*. It is the grand policy of Satan, first to tempt the children of God to doubt of their adoption ; next to distrust God's fatherly care and provision, and last of all to use unwarrantable means to help themselves. Thus Satan dealt with Christ, and thus he deals with christians ; for to work a miracle at Satan's direction, was not a lawful mean of providing food for himself.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Note first, That though the devil abused scripture, yet Christ uses it. Good things are never the worse for being abused by Satan and his instruments. Note, 2dly, The weapon which our Saviour made use of to vanquish Satan ; it was the word of God : *It is written*, says Christ. Learn thence, That the scripture, or the written word of God, is the only sure weapon wherewith to vanquish Satan, and beat back all his fiery temptations. The scripture is God's armoury, out of which all our weapons of war must be taken, for managing our conflict with sin and Satan.

5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them : for that is delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine. 8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Observe, 1. The next sin which Satan tempts our Saviour to, is the sin of idolatry, even to worship the devil himself. Oh thou impudent and foul spirit, to desire thy Creator to worship thee, an apostate creature ! Doubtless there is no sin so black and foul, so horrid and monstrous, but the christian may be tempted to it, when Christ himself was tempted to worship the tempter, even the devil himself. St. Matthew reads it, *If thou wilt worship me* ; St. Luke, *If*



*thou wilt worship before me.* From whence we may gather, That if to worship before the devil, be to worship the devil, then to worship before an image, is to worship the image. *Dr. Lightfoot.* Observe, 2. The bait which Satan makes use of to allure our Saviour to the sin of idolatry, representing to his eye and view all the glories of the world in a most inviting manner, and that in a moment of time, that so he might affect him the more, and prevail the sooner. Learn thence, That the pomp and grandeur of the world is made use of by Satan as a dangerous snare to draw men into a compliances with him, in his temptations unto sin: *He shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.* Observe, 3. What an impudent liar and proud boaster the devil is; he was a liar from the beginning: *All this will I give thee, for it is delivered unto me.* An impudent untruth, for the dominion over the things of the world was never given to the angels, neither has the devil any power over the creatures, but by permission from God. The devil is a most impudent liar; he told the first lie, and by long practice has become a perfect master in the art of lying. Observe also, The devil's boasting as well as lying: *All this will I give thee;* when he had not one foot of ground to dispose of. Great boasters are for the most part great liars, and such boasters and liars are like the devil. Observe, 4. How our Saviour declares the true and only object of religious worship; namely, God himself: *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Religious worship is to be given to none of the creatures, neither to angels nor men, how excellent soever, but to God alone. We read but of two creatures that ever desired in scripture to be worshipped with divine worship; namely, the devil and Antichrist: but the command is peremptory, *Thou shalt worship the Lord, and him only.*

9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; 11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou

dash thy foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

Observe here, 1. The power which Satan, by God's permission, had over the body of our blessed Saviour: he took him up, and carried his body through the air, from the wilderness to Jerusalem, and there set him upon one of the pinnacles of the temple. Learn hence, 1. That Satan, by God's permission, may have power over the bodies of men, yea, over the bodies of the best of men. 2. That this exercise of Satan's power over the bodies of men, is no argument that such persons do not belong to God. Our Saviour himself, who was dear to God, is yet left for a time in Satan's hands. But though Satan had a power to set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, yet he had no power to cast him down: though Satan's malice be infinite, his power is limited and bounded; he cannot do all the mischief he would, and he shall not do all he can. Observe, 2. The sin which Satan tempts Christ to; the sin of self-murder: *Cast thyself down.* Learn, That self-murder is a sin which Christ himself was, and the best of his children may be, solicited and tempted to; yet though Satan solicited Christ to the sin, he could not compel him to comply with the temptation. Thence note, That how much earnestness and importunity soever Satan uses in pressing his temptation, he can only persuade, he cannot compel; he may entice, but cannot enforce. Observe, 3. The argument which Satan uses to persuade Christ to the sin of self-murder: it is a scripture argument, he quotes a promise: *He shall give his angels charge over thee.* What a wonder is here, to see the devil with a Bible under his arm, and with a text of scripture in his mouth! Christ had alleged scripture before to Satan; here Satan retorts scripture back again to Christ. *It is written,* says Christ; *It is written,* says Satan. Learn, That Satan knows how to abuse the most excellent and comfortable scriptures to the most horrid and pernicious ends and purposes; he that had profanely touched the sacred body of Christ with his hand, sticks not presumptuously to handle the holy scriptures with his tongue. Observe, 4. The text of scripture which Satan makes use of: *Psal. xci. 11,*

12. *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; where the doctrine is good, but the application bad.* The doctrine is true, that God is pleased to employ his angels for the good of his servants, and particularly for their preservation in times of danger: but see how falsely the devil perverts, misapplies, and wreasts, that sacred scripture. When God promises that his angels shall keep us, it is *in all his ways*; not in our own crooked paths. Learn, That although the children of God have the promise of the guardianship of his holy angels, yet then only may they expect their protection, when walking in the way of their duty: *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* Observe lastly, The issue of his combat: Satan is vanquished, and departs from our Saviour. St. Matthew says, *The devil left him, and angels came and ministered unto him.* Satan is conquered, and quits the field. Teaching us, That nothing like a vigorous resistance of temptation, causes the tempter to flee from us. Satan is both a cowardly enemy, and a conquered enemy; resist him, and he will run.

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. 16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were

in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Our blessed Saviour being thus fitted and prepared by his baptism and temptation for the execution of his ministerial office, he now enters upon the great work of preaching the gospel, and St. Luke here declares the first place he preached at, namely, Nazareth; and the first text he preached upon, *Isa. lxi. 1.* Observe, 1. The place where our Saviour preached at: he bestowed his first sermon upon Nazareth, the place of his conception and education; for though Christ was born at Bethlehem, yet he was bred and brought up at Nazareth; there he had his poor, but painful education, working on his father's trade, that of a carpenter. This prejudiced the Jews against him, who looked for a sceptre, not an axe, in the hand of him *that was born King of the Jews.* Our Saviour's short and secret abode at Bethlehem, and his long and public living at Nazareth, occasioned him to be called *Jesus of Nazareth*; yet some conceive it was a nick-name, fastened by the devil upon our Saviour, that he might disguise the place of Christ's nativity, and leave the Jews at a greater loss concerning their Messiah. Sure it is, that this name, *Jesus of Nazareth*, stuck upon our Saviour all his life; and at his death was fixed by Pilate on his cross. Yea, after his ascension, such as believed on him were called, *The sect of the Nazarenes, or the followers of Jesus of Nazareth.* Observe, 2. The text which our Saviour preached upon at Nazareth: he takes it out of the prophet Esaias, chap. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;* that is, God the Father hath poured forth his Holy Spirit without measure upon me, in all the gifts and graces of it, to fit and furnish me for the work of a mediator; and particularly, *to preach the gospel to the poor in spirit, and to such as are poor in outward condition also, if meekened and humbled with the sight and sense of their sins. To bind up the broken-hearted;* that is, to comfort them with the glad tidings of the gospel. *To preach deliverance to the captives;* to let such sinners know, who were slaves to sin and Satan, that a Deliverer is come, if they be willing to be delivered by him. *To preach the*

acceptable year of the Lord; or to proclaim a spiritual jubilee, in which God proffers pardon of sin and reconciliation with himself upon the terms of the gospel. Learn hence, 1. That God stirreth up none to take upon them the office of the ministry, whom he hath not fitted and furnished with gifts for the regular discharge of it. 2. That Christ himself did not undertake the office of a mediator, but by the ordination of God the Holy Spirit: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, and he hath sent me to preach the gospel.* 3. That no creature, angel or man, could perform the office of a mediator, but only Christ, who was consecrated to that office by an anointing from the Holy Spirit without measure: *The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me.* 4. That the preaching of the gospel is the great ordinance which Christ himself made use of, and recommended to his apostles and ministers, for enlightening blind sinners, for comforting broken hearts, and for delivering captive souls from the slavery and dominion of sin and Satan: *He hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to publish deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind.* What enemies then are they to the souls of men who have low and mean thoughts of this high and honourable ordinance of God, the preaching of the everlasting gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation? Observe, 3. The behaviour of our Saviour's auditors, the men of Nazareth, under his preaching: their eyes were fixed, and their minds intent, upon him, and upon what was spoken by him: *The eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him*; not closed with sleep, nor gazing about upon others; but fixed upon Christ the preacher. Fixing of the eye is a great help to the attention of the ear, and the intention of the mind; a fastened eye is a mean to help us to a fixed heart; as a wandering eye is both a sign and a cause of a wandering heart. O that our hearers would imitate our Saviour's hearers under the word! They fastened their eyes upon him, as if they meant to hear with their eyes as well as with their ears: and yet we have cause to suspect that curiosity rather than piety caused this their attention; seeing, as you will find, ver. 29. that these very persons, who out of novelty were ready to eat his words, soon after out of cruelty were ready to devour the speaker: *for they thrust him out of*

*the city, led him to the brow of the hill, and would have cast him down headlong.* O blessed Saviour, what wonder is it that the persons of thy ministers are despised, and their doctrine neglected, when thou thyself, the first preacher of the gospel, and for thy first sermon at Nazareth, wert thus ignominiously treated! Observe, lastly, How Christ conforms to the ceremonies of the Jewish doctrine, who, in honour of the law and the prophets, *stood up* when they read them, and, according to custom, *sat down* when they explained them. And although the synagogal worship was then laden with rules and ceremonies of human invention, and also the lives and manners both of priests and people were much corrupted, yet both our Saviour and his disciples went to the synagogue, as members of the church of Nazareth, every sabbath-day, joining with them in the public worship. From whence we may reasonably infer, that such Christians as do quietly and peaceably comply with the practice of the church in whose communion they live, in the observation of such indifferent rites as are used by her, act most agreeable to our Saviour's practice and example.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? 23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. 24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

Observe here, 1. The effect of our Saviour's ministry at Nazareth: it created wonder, but did not produce faith; they marvelled, but not believed; they admired the wisdom of his discourses, but will not own him to be the promised Messiah, because of the poverty and meanness of Christ's condition: *Is not this Joseph's son?* They expect the son of a prince, not the son of a carpenter, to be their Messiah. Thence note, That the poverty and meanness of Christ's condition was that which multitudes stumbled at, and which kept many, yea, most, from believing on him. None but a spiritual eye can discern beauty in an humbled and abased Saviour. Observe, 2. Our

Saviour wonders not that so few of his countrymen, among whom he had been bred and brought up, and with whom he had lived most part of his time, did despise his person, and reject his doctrine; he tells them, *No prophet has honour in his own country*; that is, very seldom has. Teaching us, That usually the ministers of God are most despised where they are most familiarly known; sometimes the remembrance of their mean original and extraction, sometimes the poverty of their parents, sometimes the indecencies of their childhood, sometimes the follies of their youth, sometimes the faults of their families and relations, are ript up, and made occasion of contempt; and therefore that prophet that comes from afar, and has not been much known, gains the greatest reputation amongst a people, who, being ignorant of his extraction, look upon his breeding, as well as his calling, to be divine. This good use ought to be made of our Saviour's observation, that his ministers be very wise and discreet in conversation with their people, not making themselves cheap and common in every company, nor light and vain in any company; for such familiarity will breed contempt, both of their persons and their doctrine. But our duty is by strictness and gravity of deportment to keep up an awe and esteem in the consciences of our people; always tempering our gravity with courtesy and a condescending affability. That minister which prostitutes his authority, frustrates the end of his ministry, and is the occasion of his own contempt.

25 But I tell you of a truth, Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

Here our Saviour by a double instance confirms what he had last told his countrymen at Nazareth, namely, that prophets are most despised by their own countrymen and acquaintance, and that strangers

oft-times have more advantage by a prophet than his own people. The first instance of this which our Saviour gives them, is in the days of Elias, though there were many widows then in his own nation, yet none of them were qualified to receive his miracles, but a stranger, a *widow of Sarepta*. The second instance was in the days of Elisha; when though there were many lepers in and about the neighbourhood, yet they being his countrymen, despised him, and none were qualified for a cure but Naaman the Syrian, a man of another country. Thus the prophets of God, like some fishermen, catch least in their own pond, and do more good by their ministry among strangers, than among their own countrymen, kinsfolk, and near relations: *No prophet is accepted in his own country*.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30 But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.

Observe here, 1. The horrid impiety of the people of Nazareth, in thrusting their Saviour out of their city, and their barbarous and bloody cruelty in bringing him to the brow of the hill, with full intent to cast him down headlong. But Christ was to die a clean contrary way, not by throwing down, but by lifting up. O ungrateful and unhappy Nazareth! is this the return you make that divine Guest, which for thirty years had sojourn'd in your coasts? No wonder that the ablest preaching, and most exemplary living, of the holiest and best of Christ's ministers obtain no greater success at this day amongst a people, when the presence of Christ at Nazareth, for thirty years together, had no better influence upon the minds and manners of that people; but instead of receiving his message, they rage at the messenger: neither let any of the ministers of Christ think it strange, that they are ignominiously despised, when our Master before us was in danger of being barbarously murdered, and that for his plain preaching to his own people, the men of Nazareth. But observe, 2. The miraculous escape of our blessed Lord from the murdering hands of the

wicked Nazarites: *He, passing through the midst of them, went his way.* How and after what manner he escaped is not declared, and therefore cannot without presumption be determined. Although the Romanists, to make way for their doctrine of transubstantiation, positively affirm, that, contrary to the nature of a body, he penetrated through the breasts of the people. But whether he struck them with blindness that they did not see, or smote them with fear that they durst not hold him, or whether by a greater strength than theirs, (which his Godhead could easily supply his human nature with,) he escaped from them, it is neither prudent to enquire nor possible to determine: we know it was an easy thing for him, who was God as well as man, to quit himself of any mortal enemies; and at the same time, when he rescued himself, could have ruined them, by frowning them into hell, or looking them into nothing.

31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days. 32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. 33 And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. 35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. 36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. 37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

Our blessed Saviour being driven out of Nazareth by the fury of his countrymen, departs to Capernaum, where he entered their synagogues, and taught. Who can declare the pains that our Saviour took, and the hazards which he ran, in preaching

the everlasting gospel to lost sinners! But observe the smallness of his success; the people were astonished, but not believed; his doctrine produced admiration, but not faith; his auditors were admirers, but not believers. *They were astonished at his doctrine:* the reason of which astonishment is added, *For his word was with power;* that is, there was majesty in his person, spirituality in his preaching, and powerful miracles accompanying both, and confirming both, of which the evangelist here gives us an account, namely, the casting out of a devil in one possessed, ver. 33. *There was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and he cried out;* that is, the devil, that unclean spirit, did enter into him, and bodily possess him. Amongst other many calamities, which sin has brought upon our bodies, this is one, to be bodily possessed by Satan. The devil has inveterate malice against mankind, seeking to ruin our souls by his suggestions and temptations, and to destroy our bodies by some means or other. O how much is it our interest, as well as our duty, by prayer to put ourselves morning and evening under the divine care and protection, that we may be preserved from the power and malice of evil spirits! Observe, 2. The title here given to the devil: he is called the *unclean spirit*. The devils, those wicked spirits of hell, are most impure and filthy creatures; impure by reason of their original apostasy, impure by means of their actual and daily sins, such as murder and malice, lying and the like, by which they continually pollute themselves; and impure, by means of their continual desire and endeavours to pollute mankind with the contagion of their own sins. Lord! how foul is the nature of sin, which makes the devil such a foul and filthy, such an impure and unclean creature! Observe, 3. The substance of the devil's outcry: *Let us alone, what have we to do with thee?* Art thou come to destroy us? that is, to restrain us from the exercise of our power. The devil thinks himself destroyed, when he is restrained from doing mischief. Observe, 4. The title given by the devil to our Saviour; he styles him, *The Holy One of God*. How comes this acknowledgment out of the devil's mouth? Could an apostle make a profession beyond this? But how comes Satan to make it? For no good end, and with no good intention, we may be sure; for the devil never speaks truth

for truth's sake, but for advantage sake. Probably, 1. He might make this profession, that so he might bring the truth profest into question; hoping that the truth, which received testimony from the father of lies, would be suspected. Or, 2. It might perhaps be done to make the people believe that our Saviour had some familiarity with Satan, and did work miracles by his help, because he did confess him, and seem to put honour upon him. Hence we may learn, That it is possible for a person to own and acknowledge Christ to be the true and only Saviour, and yet to miss of salvation by him. If a speculative knowledge, and a verbal profession, of Christ were sufficient for salvation, the devil himself would not miss of happiness. Observe, 5. How our Saviour rebukes the devil for his confession, and commands him silence. *Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace*; but why was this rebuke given the devil, and his mouth stopt when he spake the truth? *Answer*, 1. Because Christ knew that the devil confess this on purpose to disgrace the truth. 2. Because the devil was no fit person to make this profession: a testimony of truth from the father of lies, is enough to render truth itself suspected. Yet the devil's evidence, that Christ was the Holy One of God, will rise up in judgment against the wicked Pharisees, who shut their eyes against the miracles, and stopt their ears against the doctrine, of the Holy One of God. Observe, lastly, How the unclean spirit obeys the voice of Christ, but with great reluctancy and regret: when the unclean spirit had thrown him in the midst, he came out. Where observe, The devil's spite at parting: he tears the man, throws him violently from place to place, showing how loth he was to be dispossessed. Where Satan has once gotten an hold, and settled himself for a time, how unwilling is he to be cast out of possession! Yea, it is a torment and vexation to him to be cast out. It is much easier to keep out Satan, than to cast him out; Satan may possess the body by God's permission, but he cannot possess our hearts without our own consent and approbation. It will be our wisdom to deny him entrance into our souls at first, by rejecting his wicked motions and suggestions; for when once entered, he will, like the strong man armed, keep the house, till a stronger than he cast him out.

38 And he arose out of the sy-

nagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. 39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

Here observe, 1. That St. Peter, a disciple, yea, an apostle, was a married person. Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the apostles of the New, did abhor the marriage-bed, nor judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The church of Rome, by denying the lawfulness of priests' marriage, makes herself wiser than God, who says, *Heb. xiii. 4. Marriage is honourable amongst all men*. Observe, 2. Peter, though a good man, and his wife's mother probably a gracious woman, yet is his family visited with sickness: strength of grace, and dearth of respect even from Christ himself, cannot prevail against diseases. God's own children are visited with bodily sickness as well as others. Observe, 3. The divine power of Christ manifested in this miraculous cure: *He stood over her*, says St. Luke; *He took her by the hand, and lifted her up*, says St. Mark. Here was an ordinary distemper cured after an extraordinary manner, by a touch of Christ's hand in an instant: *Immediately the fever left her, and she arose and ministered unto them*. That she could arise argued her cure miraculous; that she could and did arise, and administer to Christ and his disciples, argued her thankfulness. After Christ hath healed any of us, it ought to be our first care to administer unto him: that is, to employ our recovered strength in the service of Christ, and to improve our restored health to the honour and glory of Christ.

40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. 41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

The evangelist here declares sundry other cures wrought by our Saviour; he healed the sick, and dispossessed the devils. In our Saviour's time we read of many possessed with devils, and but few of either before or afterwards. Probably, 1. Because Satan, perceiving the Messiah to be come in the flesh to destroy his kingdom, did rage the more, and discover greater malice and enmity against mankind. 2. Perhaps Almighty God suffered Satan at that time to possess so many, that Christ might have occasion to manifest his divine power by casting Satan out. And accordingly we find our Saviour dispossessing all that were possessed by Satan. It is added, *That he suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him*; that is, Christ would not be made known to be the Son of God by the preaching of the devil, lest the world should from thence take occasion to think that our Saviour held a correspondence with those wicked spirits, and that the miracles which he wrought were performed by the devil's assistance, as being one in combination with him. Possibly from the devils owning Christ to be the Holy One of God, the Pharisees concluded that there was a compact and agreement betwixt them; and thereupon their affirmation was grounded, *He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils*.

42 And when it was day, he departed, and went into a desert place; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. 43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent. 44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

Observe here, 1. The great work and business of our Saviour's life: to preach the gospel. *I must preach the kingdom of God, for therefore came I forth*. Preaching was Christ's great work, it is undoubtedly his ministers.' Christ omitted some opportunities of working miracles, that he might preach to other cities: this was his great work. Observe, 2. It being Christ's great design to plant and propagate the gospel, he would not confine his ministry to one particular place, not to the great city of Capernaum, but resolves to preach the word in smaller towns and vil-

lages; leaving his ministers herein an instructive example, to be as willing to preach the gospel in the smallest villages, as in the largest and most populous cities, if God calls us thereunto. Let the place be never so obscure and mean, and the congregation never so small and little, if God sends us thither, the greatest of us must not think it beneath us to go and instruct an handful of people.

#### CHAP. V.

AND it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets. 3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Here observe 1. That our Saviour used the sea as well as the land in his passage from place to place to preach the gospel; and the reasons why he did so might probably be these: 1. To show Nature's intent in making of the sea: namely, to be sailed upon, as the land to be walked upon. 2. That Christ might take occasion to manifest his Deity, in working miracles upon the sea: namely, by calming of the waves and stilling of the winds. 3. It might be to comfort sea-faring men in their distresses, and to encourage them to pray to such a Saviour as had an experimental knowledge of the dangers of the sea: it were well if sailors would consider this, and instead of injuring themselves to the language of hell when they go down into the deep, would direct their prayer unto Christ, and look up to him; who now in heaven has the remembrance of what he himself endured and underwent here on earth, and on the sea. Observe, 2. The circumstance of time, when Christ used to put forth to sea: it was usually after he had wrought some extraordinary miracle, which set them on admiring and commending of him; as after he had fed so many thousands, with a few barley loaves and fishes, presently he put forth to sea, shunning thereby all popularity and vain-glorious applause from the multitude which he was never ambitious of, but in-

dastiously avoided. Observe, 3. That after our Saviour's resurrection, we never find him sailing any more upon the seas. For such a fluctuating and turbulent condition, which necessarily attends sea voyages, was utterly inconsistent with the constancy, stability, and perpetuity, of Christ's estate when risen from the grave. The firm land better agreeing with his fixed state, he keeps upon it, till his ascension into heaven. Observe, 4. That Christ scruples not to preach to the people in, and out of the ship: *He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.* Sometimes we find our holy Lord preaching upon a mountain, sometimes in a ship, sometimes in a house, as often as may be in a synagogue. He that laid hold of all seasons for preaching the gospel, never scrupled any place which convenience offered to preach in; well knowing that it is the ordinance that sanctifies the place, and not the place the ordinance.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. 5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. 6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. 7 And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10 And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour having

delivered his doctrine to the people, confirms his doctrine with a miracle, and with such a miracle as did at once instruct and encourage his apostles; the miraculous number of fish which they caught did prefigure and prefigure their miraculous success in preaching, planting, and propagating, the gospel. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's command to Peter, and his ready compliance with Christ's command: *Let down your nets for a draught,* says Christ: *We have toiled all night,* says St. Peter, *and caught nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net.* This mystically represents to us, 1. That the fishers of men may labour all night, and all day too, and catch nothing. This is sometimes the fisherman's fault, but oftener the fishes'. It is the fisher's fault that nothing is taken, if he doth only play upon the sands, and not *launch out into the deep*; deliver some superficial and less necessary truths, without opening to the people the great mysteries of godliness. If they fish with broken nets, either deliver unsound doctrine, or lead unexemplary lives. If they do not *cast the net on the right side of the ship*; that is, rightly divide the word, as workmen that need not to be ashamed. And if they do not fish at Christ's command, but run a fishing unsent, it is then no wonder that they labour all their days and catch nothing. But very often it is the fishes' fault, rather than the fisherman's: worldly men are crafty and cunning, they will not come near the net; hypocrites are slippery, like eels, the fishermen cannot long hold them, but they dart into their holes; priding themselves in their external performances, and satisfying themselves with a round of duties. The great men of the world break through the net, the divine commands cannot bind them, *Jer. v. 5. I will go to the great men, and speak to them: but they have broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.* Observe, 3. The miraculous success which St. Peter had, when at Christ's command he let down the net: *They inclosed such a multitude of fishes that their net brake.* Two things our Saviour aimed at in this miracle, 1. To manifest to his disciples the power of his Godhead, that they might not be offended at the poverty and meanness of his manhood. 2. To assure them of the great success which his apostles and their successors might expect in planting and propagating of the gospel. If the ministers of Christ, whom he calls *fishers of*



men, be faithful in the cast, his power shall be magnified in the draught. Some of our fish will cleave eternally to the rocks, others play upon the sands, more will wallow in the mud, and continue all their days in the filth of sin, if our Master, at whose command we let down the net, doth not inclose them in it, as well as assist us in the casting of it. Observe, 4. What influence the sight of this miracle had upon St. Peter: it occasioned fear and amazement, and caused him to adore Christ, and declare himself unworthy of his presence; *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* Not that the good man was weary of Christ's presence, but acknowledged himself unworthy of it. It is a great discovery of our holiness, to revere God, and fear before him, when he doth wonderful things before us, though they be wonders of love and mercy: here was a wonderful appearance of Christ's power and mercy to St. Peter, but it affects him with a reverential fear and awful astonishment. Observe, 5. How St. Peter and the rest of the apostles, at Christ's call, forsook all and followed him: they left father and friends, ship and nets, and followed Jesus. Whom Christ calls, he calls effectually; he draws whom he calls, and works their heart to a ready compliance to their duty. And although when they were first called to be disciples, they followed their trades of fishing for a time, yet upon their second call to the apostleship, they left off their trade, and forsook all to follow the ministry; teaching the ministers of the gospel, that it is their duty to give themselves wholly up to their great work, and not to encumber themselves with secular affairs and worldly business. Nothing but an indispensable necessity in providing for a family can excuse a minister's incumbering himself with worldly concerns and business: *They forsook all, and followed Jesus.*

12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy; who seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. 14 And he charged

him to tell no man: but go and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

Observe here, 1. The petitioner, that in a very humble and submissive manner came unto Christ for cure and healing: *A leper fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* He doth not question Christ's power, but distrusts his willingness to help and heal him. Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed, by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him. Observe, 2. The great readiness of Christ to help and heal this distressed person: *Jesus touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean.* By the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched; therefore Christ touching this leper, shows himself to be above the law; that he was the Lord of it, and might dispense with it. And his healing this leper, by the word of his mouth and the touch of his hand, showed him to be truly and really sent of God; for leprosy among the Jews was accounted an incurable distemper, called the finger of God; a disease of his sending, and of his removing. Our Saviour therefore, as a proof of his being the Messiah, tells John's disciples, *Matt. xi. 5. That the lepers were cleansed, and the dead raised by him:* which two being joined together, do imply, that the cleansing of the lepers is as much an act of divine power, as the raising of the dead; and accordingly, 2 Kings v. 7. it is said, *Am I God, that this man sends unto me to cure a person of his leprosy?* Observe, 3. The certainty and the suddenness of the cure was a farther proof of Christ's divine power: *Immediately the leprosy departed.* Christ not only cured him immediately, but instantaneously; not only without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ showed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness. Observe, 4. A twofold charge and command given by Christ to the leper, 1. To tell it to no man. Where the great modesty.

piety, and humility of our Saviour are discovered, together with the prudent care he took of his own safety : his modesty, in concealing his own praises ; his humility, in shunning all vain-glorious applause and commendation ; his piety, in referring all the honour and glory to God his Father ; and the care of his own safety appeared, lest the publishing of his miracles should create untimely danger from the Pharisees.

2. The next part of the charge given to the recovered leper is, to go and show himself to the priest, and to offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them ; that is, to testify to the Jews, that he did not oppose the ceremonial law, which required a thank-offering at his hand ; and also that the miracle might testify that he was the true and promised Messiah. Learn hence, That our blessed Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed, so long as the time of its continuance did endure ; though he came to destroy that law, yet whilst it stood, he would have it exactly observed. See note on *St. Matt. viii. 2.*

16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

The duty of private and solitary prayer is not more strictly enjoined by our Saviour's command, than it is recommended to us by his example. Observe, 1. The duty which our holy Lord performed : *prayer*. We have much more business with God in prayer than Christ had ; he had no sins to be humbled for, nor beg pardon of ; no need to pray for any sanctifying habits of grace, the Holy Spirit being given to him without measure ; yet did our holy Lord spend much of his time in prayer ; he took delight in paying this homage to his heavenly Father. Observe, 2. What kind of prayer our Lord did eminently delight in : it was solitary and private prayer. He often went alone, even out of the hearing of his own disciples. The company of our best friends is not always seasonable nor acceptable. There are times and seasons when a christian would not be willing that his dearest relations upon earth should bear that intercourse which passes between him and his God. Observe, 3. The place our Lord withdraws to for private prayer : it is *the desert* ; he withdrew into the wilderness and prayed, both to avoid ostentation, and also to enjoy communion with his Father. The modest Bridgroom of his church, says St. Bernard, will not im-

part himself so freely to his spouse before company. *St. Mark i. 35. adds, That our Saviour rose up a great while before day, and went into this desert place to pray.* Teaching us, That the morning is the fit season, yea, the best of seasons, for private duties ; now are our spirits freest, and our spirits freest, before the distractions of the day break in upon us. It is certainly much better to go from prayer to business, than from business to prayer. Note lastly, That our blessed Saviour had no idle hours here in the world ; his time did not lie upon his hands as ours do ; he was always either preaching or praying, or working miracles ; either paying homage to God, or doing good to man. Lord, help us to imitate this thy instructive example, by embracing all opportunities of glorifying God, and doing good to one another.

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem ; and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them. 18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy : and they sought *means* to bring him in, and to lay him before him. 19 And when they could not find by what *way* they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. 20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. 21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies ? Who can forgive sins but God alone ? 22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts ? 23 Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; or to say, Rise up and walk ? 24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick

of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up the couch, and go unto thine house. 25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. 26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

As the great end of our Saviour's miracles was to confirm his doctrine, so commonly after his preaching he wrought his miracles. The scribes and Pharisees, though they had no love for our Saviour's person, nor value for his ministry, yet they frequently accompanied him wherever he went, partly to cavil at his doctrine, and partly out of curiosity to see his miracles: but observe the gracious condescension of our Saviour; although he well knew that the Pharisees at this time attended upon him with no good intention, yet he puts forth his divine power in working miracles before them: *The power of the Lord was present to heal.* Not that Christ's power was at any time absent, but it is said now to be present, because it was now exerted and put forth at his will and pleasure. And accordingly at this time, before the Pharisees' eyes, he miraculously cures a person sick of the palsy, as the paragraph before us does inform us. Wherein observe, 1. The diseased and distressed person, *one sick of the palsy*, which being a resolution and weakness of the nerves, enfeebles the joints, and confines a person to his bed or couch. As a demonstration of Christ's divine power, he was pleased to single out the palsy and leprosy, incurable diseases, to work a cure upon. Now this person was so great a cripple, by reason of the palsy, that he could not go, nor be led, but was carried in his bed or couch. Observe, 2. As the grievousness of the disease, so the greatness of the people's faith. The man and his friends had a firm and full persuasion, that Christ was clothed with a divine power, and able to help him; and they hope in his goodness, that he was willing as well as able. And accordingly, the roof of the Jewish houses being flat, they uncover some part of it, and let the bed down with the sick man in it, and lay him at the foot of Christ, in hopes of help and healing. Observe, 3. That no sooner did they exercise their faith

in believing, but Christ exerts his divine power in healing: yet the object of their faith probably was not Christ's divine power as God, but they looked upon him as an extraordinary prophet, to whom God had communicated such a divine power as Elijah and Elisha had before him. Yet, see the marvellous efficacy even of this faith, which obtained not only what was desired, but more than was expected. They desired only the healing of the body, but Christ heals body and soul too, saying, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Thereby our Saviour signifies to them, that sin is the meritorious cause of sickness, and consequently, that in sickness the best way to find ease and deliverance from pain, is first to seek for pardon; for the sense of pardon will in some degree take away the sense of pain. Observe, 4. The exception which the Pharisees take against our Saviour for pronouncing that this man's sins were forgiven him: they charge him with blasphemy, urging, that it is God's peculiar prerogative to pardon sin. Indeed their proposition was true, but their application was false. Nothing more true, than that it is the highest blasphemy for any mere man to arrogate and assume to himself the incommunicable property of God, absolutely and authoritatively to forgive sin. But then their denying this power to Christ of forgiving sins, which he had as God from all eternity, and as mediator, God and man in one person, when here on earth; this was blasphemy in them; but the assuming and challenging in it, none in him. - Observe, 5. To cure, if possible, the obstinacy and blindness of the Pharisees, our Saviour gives them a twofold demonstration of his Godhead; 1. By letting them understand that he knew their thoughts, *Jesus perceived their thoughts*, ver. 22. To know the thoughts, to search the hearts, and understand the reasonings, of men, is not in the power of angels or men, but the prerogative of God only. 2. By assuming to himself a power to forgive sins: for our Saviour here, by taking upon him to forgive sins in his own name and by his own authority, doth give the world an undeniable proof, and a convincing evidence, of his Godhead: *for who can forgive sins but God only?* Observe, 6. The effect which this miracle had upon the minds of the people: they marvelled and were amazed, were filled with fear, but not with faith; astonished, but did not believe. Learn hence, That the sight of Christ's

own miracles is not sufficient to work faith in the soul, without the efficacious grace of God ; the one may make us marvel, the other must make us believe.

27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom : and he said unto him, Follow me. 28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him. 29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house : and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. 30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners ? 31 And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician ; but they that are sick. 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The number of our Lord's apostles not being filled up, observe, 1. What a free and gracious, what an unexpected and undeserved choice Christ makes. *Levi*, that is *Matthew*, (for he had both names,) a grinding publican, who gathered the tax for the Roman emperor, and was probably guilty, as others were, of the sins of covetousness and extortion, yet he is called to follow Christ, as a special disciple. Learn hence, That such is the freeness of divine grace, that it sometimes calls and converts sinners unto Christ, when they think not of him, nor seek unto him. Little did Levi now think of a Saviour, much less seek after him, yet is he here called by him, and that with an efficacious call : *Matthew*, a publican ; *Zaccheus*, an extortioner ; *Saul*, a persecutor ; all these are effectually called by Christ, as instances and evidences of the mighty power of converting grace. Observe, 2. *Levi's* or *Matthew's* ready compliance with Christ's call : *He presently arose and followed him*. Where the inward call of the Holy Spirit accompanieth the outward call of the word, the soul readily conspires and yields obedience to the voice of Christ. Our Saviour, says the pious bishop Hall, speaks by his word to our ears, and we hear not, we stir not ; but when he speaks by his Spirit efficaciously to our hearts, Satan cannot hold us down, the world shall not keep us back ;

but we shall with Levi instantly arise and follow our Saviour. Observe, 3. *Levi*, to show his thankfulness to Christ, makes him a great feast. Christ invited Levi to a discipleship, Levi invites Christ to a dinner ; the servant invites his Master, a sinner invites his Saviour ; a better guest he could not invite, Christ always comes with his coat with him. We do not find that when Christ was invited to any table, he ever refused to go ; if a publican, if a Pharisee, invited him, he constantly went ; not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good ; Christ feasts us when we feed him. Levi, to give Christ a pledge and specimen of his love, makes him a feast. Learn thence, That new converts are full of affection towards Christ, and very expressive of their love unto him. *Levi's* heart being touched with a sense of Christ's rich love, makes him a royal feast. Observe, 4. The cavil and exception which the scribes and Pharisees made at our Lord's free conversation. They censure him for conversing with sinners. Malice will never want matter of accusation. Our Saviour justifies himself, telling them he conversed with sinners as their physician, not as their companion : *They that are whole need not a physician ; but they that are sick*. As if our Lord had said, " With whom should a physician converse but with sick patients ! And is he to be accused for that ? Now this is my case. I am come into the world to do the office of a kind physician unto men : surely then I am to take all opportunities of conversing with them, that I may help and heal them, *for they that are sick need the physician* ; but as for you scribes and Pharisees, who are well and whole in your own opinion and conceit, I have no hopes of doing good upon you ; for such as think themselves whole desire not the physician's help." Now from this assertion of our Saviour, *The whole need not the physician, but the sick*, these truths are suggested to us, 1. That sin is the soul's malady, its spiritual disease and sickness. 2. That Christ is the physician appointed by God for the cure and healing of this disease. 3. That there are multitudes of sinners spiritually sick, who yet think themselves sound and whole. 4. That such, and only such as find themselves sin-sick, and spiritually diseased, are subjects capable of Christ's healing : *They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick*. I

*come not, says Christ, to call the (opinion-atively) righteous, but the (sensible) sinner, to repentance.*

33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? 34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? 35 But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 36 And he spake also a parable unto them: No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. 37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. 38 But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. 39 No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

An objection is here made against the disciples of our Saviour, that they did not fast so much and so often as John Baptist's disciples did. John's disciples imitated their master, who was a man of an austere life; Christ's disciples imitated him, who was of a more free conversation. Observe therefore our Saviour's defence, which he makes for the not fasting of his disciples; he declares, that at present it was neither suitable nor tolerable; not suitable, in regard of Christ's bodily presence with them, who being their *bridegroom*, and his disciples children of the bride-chamber, it was now a day of joy and rejoicing to them, and mourning and fasting would be very improper for them. But *when the bridegroom shall be taken away*, that is, Christ's bodily presence removed, then there will be cause enough for the disciples to fast and mourn. Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ is the bridegroom of his spouse the church. 2. That this bridegroom was to be taken away. 3. That because of the bridegroom's removal, the church did, shall, and must fast: *The*

*days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away, and then shall they fast.* Again our Saviour declares, that this discipline of fasting was not at present tolerable for his disciples, for they were at present but raw, green, and tender, unable to bear the severities and rigours of religion, any more than an old garment can bear a piece of new cloth to be set into it, or any more than old bottles can bear new wine to be put into them. The sense of our Saviour's words seems to be this, "My disciples at present are tender and weak, newly called and converted, they cannot therefore at present undergo the austerities of religion, fastings, weepings, and watchings; but ere long I shall leave them, and go to heaven, from whence I will send down my Holy Spirit upon them, which will enable them to all the duties that the gospel enjoins. The lesson of instruction which we may probably gather from hence, is this, That it is hurtful and dangerous for young converts, for weak christians, to be put upon the severe exercises of religion, or to be urged to the performance of all such duties as are above their strength, but they ought to be treated with that tenderness which becomes the mild and gentle dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour, says one, does here commend prudence to his ministers, in treating their people according to their strength, and putting them upon duties according to their time and standing. We must consult what progress our people have made in christianity, and manage accordingly."

#### CHAP. VI.

AND it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn-fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing *them* in *their* hands. 2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days? 3 And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, What David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him; 4 How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not law-

ful to eat, but for the priests alone ? 6 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

In the former part of this chapter we find our blessed Saviour defending his disciples from the clamorous accusations of the Pharisees for breaking the sabbath-day, because they plucked the ears of corn, and rubbed them in their hands, in order to the satisfying of their hunger. Where note, 1. The great poverty, the low estate and condition, of Christ's own disciples in the world. They wanted bread, and were forced to pluck the ears of corn to satisfy their hunger. God may, and sometimes does, suffer his dearest children to fall into straits, and to taste of want, for the trial of their faith and dependence upon his power and goodness. Note, 2. How the hypocritical Pharisees blame this action of the disciples, namely, their plucking off the ears of corn ; yet did they not charge them with theft for so doing ; because to take in our great necessity so much of our neighbour's goods as we may reasonably suppose, that, if he were present and knew our circumstances, he would not deny us, is no theft. But it was the servile labour on the sabbath, in gathering the ears of corn, which the Pharisees scruple and object against. Where note, How hypocrites expend their zeal in and upon the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the greater ; placing all holiness in the observation of outward ceremonies, whilst they neglect moral duties. Note, 3. The argument with which our Saviour defends this action of his disciples ; it is taken from the example of David : necessity freed him from fault and blame in eating the consecrated bread, which none but the priests might lawfully eat ; for in case of necessity, a ceremonial precept must give place to a moral duty. Works of mercy for the preserving our lives, and the better fitting us for sabbath services, are certainly lawful on the sabbath-day. Note, lastly, The argument which our Saviour uses to prove the sabbath's observance may be dispensed with in a case of absolute necessity, and that is drawn from that authority which Christ, the institutor and lord of the sabbath, had over it : *The Son of man is lord also of the sabbath ;* that is, he has authority and power as God and as Mediator, to institute and appoint a sabbath, to alter and change it, to dispense with a breach of it upon a just and great

occasion ; and consequently, acts of mercy, which tend to fit us for works of piety, not only may, but ought, to be done on the sabbath-day. This action of the disciples being of that nature, is without just cause censured and condemned by the Pharisees ; a sort of men who were resolved to cavil at, and quarrel with, whatever our Saviour or his disciples either did or said.

6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught ; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. 7 And the Scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him. 8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. 9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing ; Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil ? to save life, or to destroy it ? 10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so : and his hand was restored whole as the other. 11 And they were filled with madness ; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

Observe here, 1. The miraculous cure which our Saviour wrought upon the man which had the withered hand ; and, 2. The effect which this miracle had upon the wicked Pharisees. In the former note, The place where our Saviour wrought this miracle, *in the synagogue* ; the time when, *on the sabbath-day* ; the manner how, by speaking of *a word* ; the persons before whom, namely, the envious and malicious Pharisees. These men were always slandering Christ's doctrine, and cavilling at his miracles, yet does our holy Lord go on with his work before their faces without discouragement. Learn thence, That the unjust censures and malicious cavils of wicked men against us, for well-doing, must not discourage us from doing our duty, either towards God or towards our

neighbour. Although the Pharisees watched our Saviour wherever he went, and when they could find no occasion of quarrel, would invent and make one, yet such was our Lord's courage and resolution, that *he bids the man that had the withered hand stand forth*; to show that he was resolved to heal him, notwithstanding their malicious purpose to accuse him for it as a breaker of the sabbath. Opposition met with in doing our duty, must not discourage us from doing good, if we follow the example of our blessed Redeemer. Observe, 2. The influence and effect which this miracle had upon the wicked Pharisees; they were filled with madness, and took counsel to kill him. Instead of being convinced by this miracle, they conspire against him for it. The enemies of Christ and his holy religion, when arguments fail, fall to violence. It is a certain sign of a weak cause, that must be supported by passion: which is all tongue, and no ear.

12 And it came to pass, in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Observe here, 1. The duty which our holy Lord performed: the duty of prayer. We have much more business with God in prayer than Christ had; he had no sins to confess, no want of grace to make known, yet did our Lord spend much time, even a whole night, in this duty. Lord, what delight didst thou take in paying this homage to thy heavenly Father! O how does thy zeal and forwardness condemn our remissness and lukewarmness; Observe, 2. It was solitary prayer that our Lord did so exceedingly delight in: *He went into the mountain alone to pray*, not suffering his very disciples to be with him. There are times and seasons when a christian would not be willing that his dearest relations upon earth should hear that intercourse which passes betwixt him and his God. Observe, 3. The place which our Lord withdraws to for privacy in prayer: *He went into a mountain*, as a place of retirement: God delights to meet his children alone. The modest Bridegroom of the church, says St. Bernard, will not impart himself to his spouse before company. Observe, 4. The time when Christ retired into this mountain to pray, and to spend a whole night in prayer, to God. If

we look back to the former part of the chapter, we shall find that it was at a time when the Pharisees were filled with rage and madness against him, and conspired to take away his life. Thence learn, That it is our duty at such times, especially when enemies lie in wait to do us hurt, to give ourselves much unto prayer. Again, if we look forward, the next verse tells us, that our Saviour was now about to send forth his twelve apostles to preach and propagate the gospel. Christ thought so great a work was not to be done without solemn and extraordinary prayer. Accordingly he spends a whole night in prayer to God upon that occasion, leaving herein a most instructive example to his church, to continue in prayer at all times; but then especially to abound in it, when persons are to be set apart for the momentous work of the ministry, that they enterprise it with extraordinary dread and caution, not with aspiring but tremendous thoughts; for *who is sufficient for these things?*

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14 Simon (whom he also named Peter) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

As the Jewish church arose from twelve patriarchs, so the christian church became planted by twelve apostles. The person sending them forth was Christ; none may undertake the work and calling of the ministry, but those whom Christ appoints and calls, not immediately by himself, but mediately by the governors of his church. The persons commissioned were disciples before they were apostles; to teach us, that Christ will have such as preach the gospel, to be disciples before they are ministers; trained up in the faith and doctrine of the gospel, before they undertake a public charge. Observe next, How carefully the names of the twelve apostles, those laborious persons in the service of souls, are recorded and transmitted with honour to posterity. God will signally honour those

who singularly honour him, and are the special instruments of his glory. Of the twelve apostles, Peter is named first, and Judas last: Peter is first named, because probably elder than the rest, or because for order's sake he might speak before the rest; from whence may be inferred a primacy, but no supremacy; a priority of order, but no superiority of degree; as a foreman of a grand jury has a precedency, but no pre-eminency; he is first in order before the rest, but has no authority over the rest; neither did St. Peter ever assume to himself a power of deciding controversies. But we find St. James, in that first general council mentioned *Acts* xv. 13. speaking somewhat definitely, *Thus I judge*, or determine the matter, and yet St. Peter was then and there present. Had the champions of the church of Rome such a passage in all the scripture for St. Peter's authority, it would make a louder noise than *pasce oves*, feed my sheep, *John* xxi. 16. Again, as St. Peter is named first, so Judas is mentioned last, with a brand of infamy upon him, the *traitor*; the person that betrayed his Lord and Master. From whence we may gather, That though the truth of grace be absolutely necessary to a minister's salvation, yet the want of it doth not disannul his office, nor hinder the lawfulness of his ministry. Judas, though a traitor, was yet a lawful minister; and a heart-hypocrite is no hypocrite *in foro ecclesie*, before the church, though he should be damned for his hypocrisy before God.

17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

Observe here, 1. The great zeal and forwardness of the people in attending upon our Saviour's ministry; he had newly begun to preach in this place, and the people flock after him from all parts, from Judea, from Jerusalem, from Tyre and Sidon, to hear his doctrine, and see his mira-

cles. When our Saviour first began to preach, the people came unto him from every quarter. His ministers find it thus; at our first coming among a people, our labours are most acceptable, and they do most good. Our people's affections are then warm, and perhaps our own too. 2. What sort of people they were who attended thus zealously on our Saviour's ministry: they were the common and ordinary people; the poor received the gospel; the learned scribes, the knowing Pharisees, those wise men after the flesh, the mighty, the noble, the great and honourable, these despised our Saviour's person, slighted his ministry, yea, sought to take away his life. Thus from the first plantation of the gospel to this day, the poorer and meaner sort of people have entertained the glad tidings of salvation: it is a sad but a certain truth, that heaven is a place where few, comparatively but very few, of the great men of the world, are like to come; their temptations are many, their corruptions strong, and their great estates, through their own abuse, become fuel to their lusts. Lord, how rare is it to find those that are eminently great, exemplarily good! Observe, 3. The nature of our Saviour's miracles. Moses's miracles were as great judgments as wonders, but Christ's miracles were as great mercies as wonders; they were salubrious and healing: *There went virtue out of him, and healed them all*. Christ's miracles were like the author of them, full of goodness; yet would not the obstinate Pharisees be convinced, either by the goodness that was in them, or by that omnipotent power which wrought them. All our Saviour's miracles were wonderful, but wonders of love and mercy.

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

As our Saviour's condition in this world was very poor, so was his disciples' condition also; therefore to relieve them against their poverty and low estate in the world, he thus bespeaks them, *Blessed be ye poor*: you that believe in me, and follow me, are in a happier condition than those that are rich, and have received their consolation; *for yours is the kingdom of heaven*. Christ was the poor man's preacher, and the poor man's comforter; yet a bare outward poverty, or an avowed voluntary poverty, will entitle none to the blessing.



It is not a poverty of possession, but a poverty of spirit, that makes us members of the kingdom of grace, and heirs of the kingdom of glory.

21 Blessed are ye that hunger now : for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now : for ye shall laugh.

Hunger and thirst are not blessings in themselves, nor yet are they curses in themselves. Sanctified hunger is a far greater blessing than surfeiting fulness : St. Matthew therefore adds, chap. v. 6. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.* Learn thence, 1. That such as spiritually hunger and thirst after Christ and his righteousness, are certainly in a happy and blessed condition. 1. That the happiness of those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, consists in being filled, *Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh.* As if Christ had said, "You, my disciples, that are now in a sad, mournful, and afflicted state, are blessed ; for there will come a time when ye shall be comforted, a time when God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes : " yet we must not think that we have nothing to do but to mourn ; there is a time to rejoice, as well as to mourn ; not that bare mourning and weeping in itself, and for its own sake, is acceptable unto God : but when we mourn rationally for our sins, and the sins of others, God will comfort us in this world by his word and Spirit, and in the world to come with the sight of himself.

22 Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy : for, behold, your reward is great in heaven : for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

Observe here, The sufferers described, the disciples ; and their sufferings foretold ; ye shall be hated, separated, and reproached. Hatred of Christ's disciples is the bitter root from which persecution grows. Where there is hatred in the heart, no wonder that reviling is in the lips. And as the disciples of Christ then were for his sake hated, reproached, and cast out of the

Jewish church ; so now such disciples as will cordially embrace, and stedfastly hold fast, the faith delivered by our Saviour, must expect and prepare for hatred and persecution ; to be separated from civil society, excommunicated from church fellowship, and all this by them who shall call themselves the guides and governors of an infallible church.

24 But woe unto you that are rich ! for ye have received your consolation. 25 Woe unto you that are full ! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now ! for ye shall mourn and weep.

Observe here, 1. That though St. Luke omits divers of the beatitudes mentioned by St. Matthew, chap. v. yet he reciteth the woes which St. Matthew omitteth. If we will understand our Saviour's doctrine fully, we must consult all the evangelists thoroughly. Observe, 2. These woes are not to be understood absolutely, but restrainedly : the woes do not belong to men because they are *rich*, because they are *full*, because they do *laugh* ; but because they place their happiness in these things ; take up with them for their portions, and rejoice in them as their chief good, valuing themselves by what they have in hand, not by what they have in hope. He that is rich and righteous, he that is great and gracious, he that has his hands full of this world, and his heart empty of pride and vain confidence ; he that laughs when God smiles, he that expresses himself joyfully when God expresses himself graciously, such a man is rich in grace, who is thus gracious in the midst of riches. For to be rich and holy, argues much riches of holiness.

26 Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you ! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Our Saviour's design in these words, is not to condemn any of his disciples or ministers, who have, by doing their duty, gained a fair reputation amongst the men of the world, but to let us understand how rarely and seldom it is attained ; for usually the best of men are the worst spoken of. Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor John the Baptist, the prophet of the New Testament, nor Christ himself, nor his apostles, did ever gain either the good will, or the good word, of the men of that generation in which they lived. The applause of the multitude, that contingent

judge of good and evil, rather attends the vain than the virtuous. None have ever been so much reproached by man as the faithful ministers of God, who have learned to take pleasure in reproaches; for though grace does not bid us invite reproaches, yet it teaches us to bid them welcome. The world has all along taken effectual care by their cruel mockings, bitter reproaches, sharp invectives, to free the ministers of God in all ages from the danger of our Saviour's woe here denounced: *Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.*

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you; 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 28 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also.

Observe here, 1. The noble spirit of christianity, and the large extent of christian charity; the Jewish kindness was limited and confined to those of their own religion, kindred, and nation, their charity began and ended at home; but our Saviour obliges his followers to the exercise of a more extensive charity, even to all mankind, even the worst of men, our enemies that seek our destruction. Christianity is so far from allowing us to persecute them that hate us, that it commands us to love them that persecute us. Observe, 2. The nature and quality of the duty enjoined: *Love your enemies*; there the inward affection is required. *Bless them that curse you*; there outward civility and affability is required. *Do good to them that hate you*; here real acts of kindness and beneficence are required to be done to the worst of enemies, though they be guilty of the worst of crimes, calumny and cruelty; striking both at our reputation and our life. Learn, That christianity obliges us to bear a sincere love to our most malicious enemies, to be ready at all times to pray for them, and upon all occasions to do good unto them. Thus to do, is an imitation of God our maker, of Christ our master: it is for the good of this lower world, and the way to a better; it is the ornament of our religion, and the perfection of our nature, and an high degree and pitch of virtue. To which may be added the next duty.

*Not to revenge injuries*: where private revenge is the thing forbidden, and we are directed, rather to suffer a double wrong than to seek a private revenge. Christianity obliges us to bear many injuries patiently, rather than to revenge one privately; we must leave the matter to God and the magistrate. The truth is, revenge is a very troublesome and vexatious passion, the man's soul swells and boils, and is in pain and anguish, and has no ease. Besides, by our avenging of one injury, we necessarily draw on another, and so bring on a perpetual circulation of injuries and revenges; whereas forgiveness prevents vexation to others, disquietment to ourselves.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

These and the like precepts of our Saviour are not to be taken strictly, but restrainedly: we are thereby obliged to charity according to others' necessities, and our own abilities, but not bound to give to every one that has the confidence to ask for what we have. Indeed every man that really wants is the proper object of our christian charity: and we must with a compassionate heart and open hand, relieve him according to his necessity, but answerable to our ability. Nor must the second part of the verse be understood as forbidding christians to seek the recovery of their just rights, by pursuing thieves, and following the law upon oppressors; but requiring us to forbear all acts of private revenge, as directly contrary to the spirit and temper of christianity. As jealousy is the rage of a man, so revenge is the rage of the devil, it is the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature.

31 And as you would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Here our Saviour lays down a most excellent rule of life, for all his disciples and followers to walk by, namely, always to do as we would be done by. The golden rule of justice and equity in all our dealings with men is this, *To do as we would be done unto.* It is a full rule, a clear rule, a most just and equitable rule, which the light of nature, and the law of Christ, binds upon us. St. Matthew, chap. vii. 12. adds, that *this is the law and the prophets*; that is, the sum of the Old Testament, and the substance of the second table. The whole of the law is this; to

love God above ourselves, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. 34 And if ye lend to *them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. 36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

The design of our blessed Saviour in all and every of these precepts is to recommend unto us all sorts and kinds of mercy and charity; namely, charity in giving, charity in forgiving, charity in lending; it is sometimes our duty (if we have ability) to lend to such poor persons as we cannot expect will ever be in a capacity, either to repay or to requite us. This is to imitate the Divine bounty, which does good to all, even to the unthankful and to the unholy. Love for love is justice; love for no love, is favour and kindness; but love and charity, mercy and compassion, to all persons, even the undeserving and the ill-deserving, this is a divine goodness, a Christ-like temper, which will render us illustrious on earth, and glorious in heaven. St. Luke says here, *Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful.* St. Matthew says, chap. v. verse last, *Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect*; implying, that love and mercy, charity and compassion, is the perfection of a christian's graces; he that is made perfect in love, is perfect in all divine graces, in the account of God. Perfection in graces, but especially in love and charity, ought to be our aim in this life, and shall be our attainment in the next.

37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

This prohibition, *Judge not*, is not to be understood of ourselves, but our neighbours. Self-judging is a great and necessary duty; rash judging of others is an heinous and grievous sin, which exposes to the righteous judgment of God. It is private judging and private condemning of persons which God forbids; it follows, *forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.* Not that a bare forgiving of others is all that God requires in order to your forgiveness, but it is one part of that obedience which we owe to God, without which it is in vain to expect forgiveness from God: *Forgive and ye shall be forgiven.* See the note on *Matt. vii. 1.*

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.

I think there is not any one text of scripture that declares the bounty of God more fully in rewarding acts of charity and mercy than this before us. O how liberal a paymaster is God! how sure and bountiful are the returns Christ makes to us for the relief given to him in his members! He promises us here, 1. Not bare measure but *good measure.* 2. *Pressed down, shaken together, and running over*; nothing adds more to the measure than the shaking of the bushel, the crowding and pressing of the corn, and heaping till the measure runneth over: now a measure will run over as long as you will pour. Learn hence, That charities done in faith, in obedience to God; and with an eye to the glory of God, will produce a certain and plentiful increase. Liberality is the way to riches; giving is the best and surest way of thriving. A little charity from us, if we have but a little, is looked upon by God as a great deal. But it is the greatest imprudence as well as impiety, to do but a little when we have the ability to do much; for he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully: *good measure, pressed down, and running over.*

39 And he spake a parable unto them: Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?

Our Saviour doubtless applied these words to the scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish

leaders, doctors, and teachers, who being ignorant of the spiritual sense of the law, (interpreting it only to the restraining of the outward man,) were very unfit to instruct and lead others; for where one blind man leads another, both are in danger of the ditch; that is, to run into ruin and destruction. Learn, 1. That ignorant, erroneous, or unfaithful ministers, are the greatest plague, and sorest punishment, that can befall a people. 1. That Christ having forewarned us of such guides, to follow them will be an inexcusable sin and folly, and never free us from the danger of destruction, but rather be an aggravation of our condemnation: *If the blind follow the blind, both will, inevitably yet inexcusably, fall into the ditch.*

40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

The application of these words, no doubt, our Saviour intended to his own disciples, partly to comfort them under sufferings, and partly to encourage them to obedience. Did they suffer hard things from an unkind world? The remembrance of what their Master suffered before them may support them. Did they meet with hard and difficult duties, such as loving enemies, doing good to them that hate and persecute them? Their Lord's example may encourage and instruct them, who loved them when they were enemies, who prayed for his murderers, and offered up his blood to God on behalf of them that shed it. Learn hence, That the perfection of a christian in this world, consisteth in the imitation of Christ Jesus, *in being as our Master*; in coming as near to his example as it is possible for persons clothed with flesh and blood to arrive at. *Every one that is perfect must be as his Master.*

41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite! cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

By the mote in our brother's eye, is meant some small and little sins discerned, or some sin suspected. By the beam in our own eye, some greater sin undiscerned. Now, says our Saviour, there is no greater sin of hypocrisy than to be curious in spying out the smaller faults of others, and at the same time indulge greater in ourselves. Learn hence, That there is no such way to teach us charity in judging of others, as to exercise severity in judging of ourselves. 2. That those who desire others should look upon their failings with a compassionate eye, must not look upon the failings of others with a censorious eye; *for with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again.*

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 44 For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. 45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Our Saviour here and elsewhere frequently compares persons to trees; the heart of man is as the root, the actions as the fruit; as the root is the principle from which the fruit springs, so the heart of man is the principle from which all human actions flow: an holy heart will be accompanied with an holy life, where there is a vital principle of grace within, there will be the actings of grace without; a good conscience will be accompanied with a good conversation. Observe farther, A double treasure discovered in the heart of man. 1. An evil treasure of sin and corruption, from whence flow evil things: but why should sin be called a treasure? Not for the preciousness of it, but for the abundance of it; a little doth not make a treasure: and also for the continuance of it; for though sin be perpetually overflowing in the life, yet doth the heart continue full. The treasure of original corruption in man's heart and nature, though by sanctifying grace it be drawn low, yet it is never in this life drawn dry. 1. Here is a good

treasure of grace discovered in a sanctified and renewed man ; which is the source and spring from whence all gracious actions do proceed and flow ; namely, a sanctified and renewed heart and nature. When once the will of man is made conformable to the will of God, it doth will and desire, choose and embrace, take pleasure and delight in, what God approves, commands, and loves ; and it will lay an injunction upon all the members of the body to act conformably thereunto.

46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ? 47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like : 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock ; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it : for it was founded upon a rock. 49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth : against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell ; and the rain of that house was great.

Our Saviour here concludes his sermon with an elegant similitude : he compares the faithful doer of the word to a wise builder, which founded his house upon a rock. Others he resembles to a foolish builder, that built his house upon the sand. The *house* is the hope of heaven and eternal life ; the *rock* is Christ ; the building upon the sand, is resting upon the bare performance of outward duties ; the *rain*, the *winds*, and the *floods*, are all kinds of afflicting evils, sufferings, and persecutions, that may befall us. The sum is ; men's hopes of salvation built upon any other besides Christ, or built upon Christ without a sincere and uniform obedience to him, are vain hopes, deceitful hopes ; for when the storm arises, when affliction or persecution comes, their confidence will fail them, their foundation will be shaken. Learn 1. That the obedient believer is the only wise man, that builds his hopes of heaven upon a sure and abiding foundation ; Christ is the rock that he builds upon, and one Christ is before a thousand creatures, one rock better than millions of sands to

build upon. 2. That such professors as rest in the bare performance of outward duties, are foolish builders ; their foundation is weak and sandy, and all their hopes of salvation vain and deceitful. Lord ! how does the carnal world build all their hopes upon the sand, on the wisdom of the flesh, on their policies, councils, friends, and riches ! They bottom their very soul upon fancies, presumptions, delusions, and vain hopes. They expect to be happy without being holy, which is to expect to be easy without being healthy. Woe to that man whose portion lies in the creature's hands, who builds all his hopes upon this earth ; for when the earth is shaken, his hopes are shaken, his heart is shaken, and he is even at his wit's end : whereas the christian that builds upon the rock, stands firm and sure ; for if ever the christian falls, Christ must fall with him : he shall never be disappointed of his hopes, unless faithfulness can disappoint ; he shall never be deceived, unless truth itself can deceive. If it be impossible for God to lie, then it is impossible for the obedient, holy, and circumspect christian finally to miscarry.

#### CHAP. VII.

The former part of this chapter relates to us a double miracle wrought by our blessed Saviour ; the one in raising the centurion's servant from his bed, the other in raising the widow's son from his bier. Both of them eminent acts and instances of his divine and almighty power. The history of the former stands thus :

**NOW** when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. 2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. 3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this : 5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. 6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself ; for I am not worthy that thou

shouldest enter under my roof: 7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. 8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers: and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

In our Saviour's miraculous cure of the centurion's servant, we have several particulars very observable; as, 1. The person applying himself to our blessed Saviour for help and healing: he was a Gentile, an Heathen, a Roman soldier, an officer and commander; yet he believes in, and relies upon the power of Christ. Note, That such is the freeness of divine grace, that it extends itself to all sorts and ranks, to all orders and degrees of men, without exception; even the bloody trade of war yields worthy clients to Christ: he doth not so much regard what we are, and whence we are, as with what dispositions and desires, with what purposes and inclinations, we come unto him. Observe, 2. The person whom the centurion came to Christ for: not for himself, nor for his son, but for his servant. *His servant was sick*; he doth not drive him out of doors, nor stand gazing by his bed-side, but looks out for help and relief for him: a worthy example of humanity! Some masters have not so much regard to their sick servants as they have to their oxen and their swine. But he is not worthy of a good servant that in a time of sickness is not willing to serve his servant. Observe, 3. Unto whom the centurion seeks, and with what zeal and application; he seeks not to wizards and conjurers, but to the physician, for his sick servant; yea, to Christ, the chief Physician; and this not with a formal relation in his mouth, but with a vehement aggravation of his disease, *My servant lies sick of the palsy, grievously tormented*, St. Matt. viii. 6. where the master's condolency,

and tender sympathy, with his afflicted servant, is both matter of commendation and imitation. Observe, 4. The happy mixture of humility and faith which was found in this centurion. See his wonderful humility in not thinking himself worthy to come into Christ's presence, or that Christ should come under his roof. The best men have always the lowest thoughts of themselves; when we esteem ourselves unworthy of any favour, Christ accounts us worthy of all. See also his faith in Christ's divine power; he believed that Christ was able at a distance, and by a single word, to command off the distemper of his servant: he tells him, that diseases were as much at Christ's command, as his servants were at his command. Humility, we see, is both the fruit of faith, and the companion of faith. An humble soul has evermore an high esteem of Christ's power, and a low esteem of itself. Observe, 5. How our blessed Saviour exceeds not only the centurion's desires, but his expectations also, St. Matt. viii. 7. *Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him*. O wonderful condescension. In St. John iv. 47, we read of a certain nobleman and ruler that twice entreated our Saviour to come to his house and heal his son, but our Lord refused. Here the centurion doth but barely tell Christ of his poor servant's sickness, and Christ, both unasked and undesired, says, *I will come and heal him*. O how far is Christ from seeming in the least to honour riches and despise poverty! He that came in the form of a servant goes down to visit a sick servant upon his poor pallet-bed, who did not come near the rich couch of the ruler's son. Observe, 6. The notice and observation which our Saviour takes of the centurion's faith; he wondered at it from him. Admiration agreed not to Christ as God, but as man it did. Christ wrought faith as God, and wondered at it as man. What can be more wonderful than to see Christ wonder? We find not our Saviour wondering at worldly pomp and greatness: when the disciples wondered at the magnificence and stately buildings of the temple, Christ rather rebuked them than wondered with them; but when he sees the gracious act and exercise of faith, he is ravished with wonder. Let it teach us to place our admiration where Christ fixes his; let us be more affected with the least measure of grace in a good man, than with all the gaieties and glories of a great man; let us not envy the one,

but admire and imitate the other. Observe, lastly, Christ doth not only admire the centurion's faith, but publishes it : *Verily I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel* ; that is, amongst the generality of the Jewish nation. For, as to particular persons, several had showed a greater faith than this, as Joseph and Mary. This expression lets us know, that where the means of faith are but small, the noble acts and exercise of faith are wonderful and soul amazing.

11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain ; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. 12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow : and much people of the city was with her. 13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. 14 And he came and touched the bier ; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. 15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. 16 And there came a fear on all : and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us ; and, That God hath visited his people. 17 And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

There were three persons raised from death to life by the powerful word of Christ's mouth ; namely, Jairus's daughter, mentioned by St. Matthew ; Lazarus, recorded by St. John ; and here the widow's son, only taken notice of by St. Luke. The place where the miracle was wrought was the city of Nain ; out of their cities, and not within them, the Jews were wont to bury their dead. Our Saviour at the gate of the city meets with the sad pomp of a funeral, a sorrowful widow attended with her mournful neighbours, following her only son to the grave. Where note, 1. The doleful and distressed condition of the

widow : there were many heart-piercing circumstances in her affliction. 1. It was the death of a son. To bury a child rends the heart of a parent ; for what are children but the parent multiplied ? But to lay a son in the grave, which continues the name, and supports the family, is a sore affliction. 2. This son was a young man in the strength and flower of his age, not carried from the cradle to the coffin. Had he died an infant, he had not been so much lamented ; but then when the mother's expectations were highest, and the endearments greatest, even in the flower of his age, he is cut off. 3. He was not only a son, but an only son ; one in whom all his mother's hopes and comforts were bound up. The death of one out of many, is much more tolerable than of all in one. The loss of that one admits of no consolation. 4. Still to heighten the affliction, it is added, that *she was a widow* ; she wanted the counsel and support of a loving yoke-fellow. Had the root been left entire, she might better have spared the branch ; now both are cut down, and she has none left to comfort her in her comfortless state of widowhood. In this distressed condition, Christ, the God of comfort, meets her, pities her, relieves her. Observe, 2. The compassion of Christ towards this distressed widow : *He saw her, and had compassion on her*. Christ saw her, she did not speak to him : no tears, no prayers, can move Christ so much as our afflictions and his own compassion. Christ's heart pitied her, his tongue said to her, *Weep not* ; his feet went to the bier, his hand *touched the coffin*, and the power of his Godhead *raised the dead*. But how strange doth Christ's counsel seem ! To bid a woman not to weep for such a loss, was to persuade her to be miserable, and not feel it ; to feel it, and not regard it ; to regard it, and yet conceal and hide it. It is not the decent expression of our sorrow then which Christ condemns, but the undue excess and extravagances of it, which our Saviour blames. And the lesson of instruction which we learn from hence is this, that christians ought to moderate their sorrow for their dead relations, how many afflicting circumstances and aggravations soever do meet together in their death : here was a child, that child a son, that son an only son, that only son carried to the grave in the flower of his age ; yet Christ says to the pensive mother, a sorrowful widow, *Weep not*. Observe, 3.

The power of Christ in raising the widow's son to life. The Lord of life arrests the arrogant Death, and rescues the prisoner out of his hand. Christ says not, In the name of God, young man, arise; but, *I say unto thee, Arise*. Christ had a power in himself, and of himself, to command the dead to arise; and the same powerful voice which raised this young man, shall in the last day raise up our dead bodies; for it is as easy for Omnipotency to say, Let them be repaired, as to say at first, Let them be made. The Socinians here own, that Christ raised this young man by a divine power, which God had communicated to him; yet deny him at the same time to be essentially God. But let them prove if they can, that a divine power, which is proper to God alone, ever was, or ever can be, communicated to a creature, without the communication of the divine nature. True, we find St. Peter, *Acts ix. 40.* commanding Tabitha to arise; but we find all he did was by faith in Christ, and by prayer unto Christ, *Acts ix. 34. Jesus Christ healeth thee, arise*: but Christ here raised the widow's son without prayer, purely by his own power; which undeniably proves him to be God. Observe, 4. The reality of the miracle: *he sits up, he begins to speak; and is delivered to his mother*. Death has no power to hold that man down, whom the Son of God bids rise up: *Immediately he that was dead sat up*; and the same power which raised one man, can raise a thousand, a million, a world; no power can raise one man but an almighty power, and that which is almighty can raise all men. It was not so much for the child's sake as the mother's sake, that the son was raised: it was an injury to the son, though a kindness to the mother, for he must twice pass through the gates of death, to others' once; it returned him from rest to labour, from the peaceful harbour, back again to the tempestuous ocean. Observe, lastly, What effects this miracle had upon the multitude: seeing the divine power thus manifestly exerted, they are filled with astonishment and amazement: they look upon our Saviour with awful and admiring looks; *They glorify and praise God for sending a great prophet amongst them*, accounting it a great act of favour that God had in this wonderful manner visited his people; yet a prophet was the highest name they could and for him, whom they saw like them-

selves in shape, but above themselves in power: *A great prophet is risen up amongst us, and God hath visited his people*.

18 And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things. 19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? 20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 21 And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. 22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

About the time of our Saviour's appearing in the world there was a general expectation of a great prince that should come out of Judea, and govern all nations: this prince the Jews called the Messias, or the Anointed, and waited for his appearance. Accordingly, when John the Baptist appeared in the quality of an extraordinary prophet, the Jews sent to know of him, whether he was the Messias or not, *John i. 19.* he answered that he was not, but only the harbinger and forerunner of the Messias; so that it was very evident that it was not for John's own information that he sent two of his disciples to Christ, to know whether he was the Messias or not; for John was assured of it himself by a voice from heaven at our Saviour's baptism, *Matt. iii. ult.* but it was for his disciples' satisfaction that he sent them to Jesus; because John's disciples were unwilling to acknowledge Christ to be the Messias, out of a great zeal for the honour of him their master; they were not willing to own any person greater than John their master, lest such an acknowledgment should eclipse and cloud him. From whence we may note, How the judgments of the best



of men are very apt to be biased and perverted by faction or interest. No doubt John's disciples were good men, and no doubt their master had often told them, as he did others, that he was not the Messias; yet they will not believe their own master, when they apprehend him to speak against their own interest; for they knew that they must rise and fall in their reputation and esteem, as their master did: therefore that John's disciples might receive full satisfaction from Christ, he sends two of his disciples to him to hear his doctrine, and see his miracles; for John perceiving his disciples to be ill-affected towards our Saviour, and hearing them speak with some envy of his miracles, he sent them to him, that being eye-witnesses of what he did, they might be convinced who he was. Observe next, The way and means which our Saviour takes to convince and satisfy John's disciples that he was the true Messias: he appeals to the miracles wrought by himself, and submits those miracles to the judgment and examination of their senses: *Go and show John the miracles which you hear and see; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear.* Christ was all this in a literal and spiritual sense also: he was an eye of understanding to the ignorant, a foot of power to the weak, he opened an ear in deaf hearts to receive the word of life, and the poor receive and embrace the gospel. Miracles are the highest attestation, and the greatest external confirmation and evidence, that can be given to the truth and divinity of any doctrine. Now our Saviour's miracles, for their nature, were divine and Godlike; they were healing and beneficial to mankind, freeing men from the greater calamities of human life; for their number, they were many; for the manner of their operation, they were publicly wrought in the sight and view of multitudes of people. To free them from all suspicion of fraud and imposture, he wrought them before his enemies, as well as in the presence of his friends and followers. And this was not done once or twice, or in one place, but at several times, and in several places, wherever he came, and this for a long time, even for three years and a half; so that our blessed Saviour had all the attestation that miracles can give, to evidence himself the true and promised Messias.

—To the poor the gospel is preached.

The poor hear and receive the gospel, See *Matt. xi. 5.* Note, That all along, in our Saviour's time and since, the poor of the world have been more disposed to hear and embrace the gospel than other men; and the reasons of it are these: 1. Because the poor have no worldly interest to engage them to reject Christ and his gospel. The high-priest, the scribes and Pharisees, had a plain worldly interest to engage them to oppose Christ and his doctrine; but the poor were free from these incumbrances and temptations. They had nothing to lose; therefore our Saviour's doctrine went down more easily with them, because it did not contradict their interest, as it did the interest of those who had great possessions. Those that are poor, and enjoy little of the good things of this life, are willing to entertain the glad tidings of happiness in another life. Such as are in a state of misery here, are glad to understand that it shall be well with them hereafter, and are willing to listen to the good news of a future happiness; whereas the rich, who have had their consolation here, are not much concerned what will become of them afterwards.

23 And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

No doubt our Saviour uttered these words with particular respect and reference to John's disciples, who, out of an extraordinary zeal for the honour of their master, were prejudiced against our Saviour; but the general import of the words doth show that there are many to whom Christ is a Rock of offence; the Jews were offended at the meanness of his extraction, at the poverty of his parents, at the lowness of his breeding, at his suffering condition; from their traditions they expected the Messias should be a temporal prince, whereas the prophets declared he should be a *man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*: be despised, and put to death. Thus at this day many are offended at Christ; some are offended at the asserted divinity of his person, and the meritoriousness of his satisfaction. Some are offended at the sublimity of his doctrine, others at the sanctity and strictness of his laws; some are offended at the free dispensations of his grace; others that the terms of christianity are very hard, and lay too great a restraint upon human nature: but, *Blessed is he*, says Christ, *that shall not be offended at me*; intimating, that such as, instead of being offended at Christ,

do believe in him, and ground their expectations of heaven and salvation wholly upon him, are in a happy and blessed condition : *Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me.*

24 And when the messengers of John were departed he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see ? A reed shaken with the wind ? 25 But what went you out for to see ? A man clothed in soft raiment ? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts. 26 But what went ye out for to see ? A prophet ? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. 27 This is *he* of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Our Saviour having given, as we may suppose, full satisfaction to John's disciples and sent them away, he enters upon a large commendation of John himself. Where we have observable, 1. The persons whom he commended John before : not his own disciples, but before the multitude ; for John's disciples had too high an opinion of their master already, inasmuch, that they envied our Saviour for overshadowing their master : John vii. 26. *Behold Christ baptizeth, and all men come unto him.* It was a great eye-sore to John's disciples, that Christ had more hearers and followers than their master ; therefore not before John's disciples, but before the multitude, is John commended : for as John's disciples had too high, so the multitude had too low, an opinion of John ; possibly because of his imprisonment and sufferings. There was a time when the people had high thoughts of John's person and ministry ; but being now clouded with sufferings, they discountenanced and undervalue him. Learn hence, How vain it is for any men, but especially for the ministers of the gospel, to value themselves by popular applause. The people condemn to-day whom they admired yesterday ; he who to-day is cried up ; to-morrow is trodden down ; the word and ministers are the same, but this proceeds from the fickleness and inconsistency of

the people : nothing is so mutable as the mind of man ; nothing so variable as the opinion of the multitude. Observe, 2. The time when our Saviour thus commended John : *when he was cast into prison by Herod.* Not when he was in prosperity, when the people flocked after him, when he preached at court, and was revered by Herod ; but when the giddy multitude had forsaken him ; when he was disgraced at court, and had preached himself into a prison ; now it is that Christ proclaims his worth, maintains his honour, and tells the people that the world was not worthy of such a preacher. Learn hence, That Christ will evermore stand by, and stick fast unto, his faithful ministers, when all the world forsakes them. Let the world slight and despise them at their pleasure ; yet Christ will maintain their honour, and support their cause ; as they bear a faithful witness to Christ, so Christ will bear witness to their faithfulness for him. Observe, 3. The commendation itself. Our Saviour commends John for four things ! for his constancy, for his sobriety, for his humility, for his gospel-ministry. 1. For his constancy : he was not a *reed shaken with the wind* ; that is, a man of an unstable and unsettled judgment, but fixed and steady. 2. For his sobriety, austerity, and high degree of mortification and self-denial : he was no delicate, voluptuous person, but grave, sober, and severe. He was mortified to the glory and honour, to the ease and pleasure, of the world : John wrought no miracles, but his conversation was almost miraculous, and as effectual as miracles to prevail upon the people. 3. For his humility : John might once have been what he would, the people were ready to cry him up for the Messias, the Christ of God : but John's humble and lowly spirit refuses all : *He confessed and denied not, saying, I am not the Christ,* but a poor minister of his, willing, but not worthy, to do him the meanest service. This will commend our ministry to the consciences of our people ; when we seek not our own glory, but the glory of Christ. 4. Our Saviour commends John for his clear preaching the gospel, and for his making known the coming of the Messias to the people : *He was more than a prophet,* because he pointed out Christ more clearly and fully than any of the prophets before him. The ancient prophets beheld Christ afar off, but John saw him face to face. They prophesied of him, he pointed at

him, saying, *This is he.* The clearer any ministry is in discovering of Christ, the more excellent and useful it is.

28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Our Saviour having highly commended John in the former verses, here he sets bounds to the honour of his ministry; adding, that though John was greater than all the prophets that went before him, seeing more of Christ than all of them, yet he saw less than those that came after him. The meanest gospel minister that preaches Christ as *come*, is to be preferred before all the old prophets who prophesied of Christ to *come*. That minister who sets forth the life and death, resurrection and ascension, of Christ, is greater in the kingdom of heaven, that is, has an higher office in the church, and a more excellent ministry, than all the prophets, yea, than John himself. The excellency of a ministry consists in the light and clearness of it: now though John's light did exceed all that went before him, yet it fell short of them that came after him; and thus he that was least in the kingdom of grace on earth, much more he that was least in the kingdom of glory in heaven, was greater than John. See note on *Matt. x. 11.*

29 And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

These words are our Saviour's farther commendation of John the Baptist; he tells us, That John had two sorts of hearers. 1. The common people and publicans. 2. The Pharisees and lawyers: and declares the different effect which John's ministry had upon these two different sorts of persons. As to the former, the common people and the publicans: the common people were accounted by the Jewish doctors as the dregs of mankind, an ignorant and rude mob; the publicans were esteemed notoriously wicked, guilty of great injustice, oppression, and extortion; yet these vile persons were converted sooner than the knowing men of the time, the self-justifying Pharisees and lawyers; for it is said, *The publicans*

*were baptized of John, and justified God*; that is, they looked upon John as a prophet sent of God; they owned his ministry, received his message, and submitted to his baptism. Those who believe the message that God sendeth, and obey it, justify God; they that do not believe and obey, accuse and condemn God. But of the others it is said, namely, of the Pharisees and lawyers, *That they rejected the counsel of God against themselves*; that is, the revealed will of God: refusing to be baptized of him. This rejecting the counsel of God we are guilty of, when we have low and undervaluing thoughts of Christ and his gospel, when we are ashamed, in times of persecution, to own and profess him, when we stop our ears to the voice of his ministers and messengers, when we submit not ourselves to the reasonable laws and commands of Christ; and this rejection of Christ at the great day, will render our condition worse than the condition of Heathens, that never heard of a Saviour; than the condition of Jews, which crucified their Saviour; yea, than the condition of devils, for whom a Saviour never was intended. Lord! where shall we appear, if we either reject or neglect thy great salvation! The chief thing then observable here, is this, That in rejecting John's baptism and ministry, they are said to reject the counsel of God towards themselves, that is, the gracious design of God in calling them to repentance, by John's ministry; by which refusal they declared, that they approved not of God's counsel as just and right in calling them to repentance, who were such zealots for the law, and so unblamable in their conversation, that it became a proverb amongst them, That if but two persons went to heaven, one of them must be a Pharisee. They therefore judged it an incongruous thing to call such righteous persons to repentance, as they took themselves to be, and to threaten them with ruin who were so dear to God: but the publicans and common people, being conscious to themselves of their sin and guilt, did approve of this counsel which God sent them by his messenger, and submitted to this baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins, to which God by the Baptist now called them.

31 And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? 32 They are like unto

children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced ; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. 33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine ; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking ; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners ! 35 But Wisdom is justified of all her children.

Our blessed Saviour in these words describes the perverse humour of the Pharisees, whom nothing could allure to the embracing of the gospel, neither John's ministry nor Christ's. This our Saviour sets forth two ways, allegorically and properly : by way of allegory he compares them to sullen children, whom nothing would please, neither mirth nor mourning ; if their fellows piped before them, they would not dance ; if they sang mournful songs to them, they would not lament : that is, the Pharisees were of such a censorious and capricious humour, that God himself could not please them, although he used variety of means and methods in order to that end. Next our Lord plainly interprets this allegory, by telling them that John came to them neither eating nor drinking, that is, not so freely and plentifully as other men, being a very austere and mortified man, both in his diet and habit ; all which was designed by God to bring the Pharisees to repentance and amendment of life. But, instead of this, they censure him for having a devil, because he delighted in solitude, and was not so free in conversation as some men, according to the ancient observation, " That he that delighteth in solitude is either an angel or a devil," either a wild beast or a god. John being thus rejected, Christ himself comes to them, who being of a free and familiar conversation, not shunning the society of the worst of men, no not of the Pharisees themselves, but complying with their customs, and accompanying them innocently at their feasts ; yet the freedom of our Saviour's conversation displeased them as much as John's reservedness of temper ; for they cry, *Behold a man gluttonous, a friend of publicans and sinners ;* Christ's affability towards sinners. they account an appro-

bation of their sins ; and his sociable disposition, looseness and luxury. Learn hence, That the faithful and zealous ministers of Christ, let their temper and converse be what it will, cannot please the enemies of religion, and the haters of the power of godliness ; neither John's austerity, nor Christ's familiarity, could gain upon the Pharisees. It is the duty of the ministers of God, in the course of their ministry, to seek to please all men for their good : but after all our endeavours to please all, if we strenuously oppose the errors and vices of the times, we shall please but very few. But if God and conscience be of the number of those few, we are safe and happy. Observe, 2. That it has been the old policy of the devil, that he might hinder the success of the gospel, to fill the minds of persons with an invincible prejudice against the ministers and dispensers of the gospel. Here the Pharisees are prejudiced unreasonably both against John and against Christ, that the success of both their ministries must be frustrated and disappointed. Observe, 3. That after all the scandalous reproaches cast upon the christian religion, and the ministers and professors of it, such as are Wisdom's children, wise and good men, will justify religion, that is, approve it in their judgments, honour it in their discourses, and adorn it in their lives : *Wisdom is justified of all her children.*

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment.

Observe here, 1. The Pharisee's civility, and our Saviour's courtesy : the Pharisee invites Christ to eat with him ; Christ readily accepts the invitation, never refusing any opportunity for doing good. There is a duty of civil courtesy which we owe to the worst of men : none are so bad but we may soberly eat and drink with them ; only let us take care, that if our converse do not make them better, their example may

not make us worse. Observe, 2. What an opportunity our Saviour lays hold upon in the Pharisee's house of doing good to a sinful woman; who coming to Christ bowed down in a sorrowful sight and sense of her sins, finds an hearty welcome to him, and is dismissed with comfort from him. The history runs thus: *Behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner*, that is, a Gentile, say some; a remarkable, notorious, and infamous sinner, say others; probably, a lewd, unclean woman: she is led in with a note of admiration, *Behold a woman that was a sinner!* Learn, That to see a sensual and notorious sinner, out of true remorse of conscience to seek unto a Saviour, is a rare and wonderful sight. Observe farther, It is not said, Behold a woman that sinned, but, *Behold, a woman that was a sinner*. One action does not denominate a person a sinner, but a habit and trade of sin. Again, it is said, *Behold, a woman in the city*: the place where she acted her lewdness added to the heinousness of her sin, it was in the city; the more public the offence, the greater the scandal. Sin is sin, though in the desert, where no eye sees it; but the offence is aggravated by the number and multitude of beholders. Yet observable it is, that there is no mention made, either of the woman's name, or of the city's name; and it is both presumption and injuriousness for any to name her, whose name God has been pleased to conceal; for this is not the same woman that anointed Christ's feet, *Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. and John xii.*—that was in Bethany, this in Galilee; that in the house of Simon the leper, this of Simon the Pharisee. Observe, 3. The behaviour and demeanour of this poor woman; she appears in the posture of a penitent: *She stood at Christ's feet behind him, weeping.* Where note, 1. The great change wrought in this sinful woman, and the evident effects of it: her eyes, which had been formerly lamps of fire by lust, are now a holy fountain of penitential tears; her hair, which she had used as a net to catch her fond and foolish lovers, doth now become a towel for her Saviour's feet. Verily, such a heart, as has once felt the sting and smart of sin, will make plentiful expressions of the greatness of its sorrow. Again, 2. *She stands behind Christ and weeps*: this proceeded, no doubt, from a holy bashfulness; she that was wont to look boldly in the face of her lovers, dares not now behold the face of her Saviour; she that was wont to send her

alluring beams forth into the eyes of her wanton lovers, now casts her dejected eyes down upon the earth; and behold the plenty of her tears, they flow in such abundance that she washes Christ's feet with them. *She began to wash his feet*, says the text, but we read not when she ended; never were our Saviour's feet bedewed with more precious liquor than this of remorseful tears. Thus doth a holy penitent account no office too mean that is done to the honour of its Saviour.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this* is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. 40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty: 42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he* to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Observe here, 1. How unreasonably the Pharisee was offended with Christ, for permitting this poor woman to come near him, and touch him. Admit she had been the greatest of sinners, might not such come to Christ, when he was come from heaven to them? Oh blessed Saviour! there is merit enough in thy blood, and mercy enough in thy bowels, to justify and save the vilest sinners, which by repentance and faith do make a timely application to thee. Observe, 2. The parable which Christ makes use of, for the Pharisee's conviction, and the woman's comfort: namely, the parable of two debtors, one of whom owed a greater sum, and the other a less, who both having nothing to pay, were both freely forgiven; and both upon their forgiveness loved their creditor much, but he most to whom most was forgiven. Now from this parable we gather these lessons of instruction; 1. That great is the debt which all mankind have contracted,

and lie under to the justice of God : 'tis here expressed by *five hundred pence*. Our debt is infinite ; and, had not miraculous mercy interposed, divine justice could never have been satisfied, but by undergoing an infinite punishment. 2. That yet all sinners stand not alike indebted to the justice of God ; some owe more, and others less ; all are guilty, but not all alike ; some owe five hundred talents, others fifty pence. 3. That be men's debt greater or less, their sins more or fewer, 'tis utterly impossible for any person of himself to clear his debt, and make satisfaction, but they that owe least stand in need of mercy and forgiveness : *He forgave them both*. 4. That the forgiveness that is in God is a free, gratuitous, and gracious forgiveness : he frankly forgave them both : *Gracious art thou, O Lord, in thy doings towards thy children, and thy tender mercy is over all thy works*.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45 Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, *the same loveth little*. 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? 50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.

Observe here, 1. How our Saviour recounts and sums up the several particular instances of this woman's love and respect towards himself : she washed, wiped, kissed, and anointed his feet, according to the custom of those eastern countries. Love will creep where it cannot go, it will stoop to the meanest offices, and is ambitious of the highest services, for and towards the

persons we sincerely love. Observe, 2. The words of comfort given by our Saviour to this poor woman : *Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee*. Thence learn, That the pardoning mercy of God is boundless and unlimited ; it is not limited to any sort of sins or sinners ; it is not limited to any degree of sins or sinners ; *Thy sins, that are many, are forgiven thee* ; and thy sins, which are heinous, are forgiven also. Observe, 3. What is the effect and fruit, of great pardoning mercy ; it is great love ; her sins, which are many, are forgiven, *for she loved much*. Her love to Christ was the effect of his pardoning love to her, and not the cause of it ; she did not first love much, and then Christ forgave her ; but Christ first forgave her, and then she loved much. Her love was a love of gratitude, because she was pardoned, and not a love of merit to purchase and procure her pardon. The Papists interpret this word (*for*) as if it were the antecedent cause of her forgiveness ; whereas it is a consequential sign and evidence, that the free grace and mercy of Christ had forgiven her ; her many and great sins were forgiven her, and therefore she loved much. The debt is not forgiven, because the debtor loves his creditor ; but the debt, or therefore loves, because the debt is forgiven. Forgiveness goes before, and love follows after. Hence learn, That much love will follow great forgiveness. Love will work in the heart towards God, in some proportion to that love which we have experienced from God. Observe lastly, The very gracious dismissal which this woman meets with from our blessed Saviour : what could she desire that is not here granted to her ? Here is remission, safety, faith, and peace ; all these here meet to make a contrite soul happy : remission is the ground of her safety, faith the ground of her peace, peace the fruit of her faith, and salvation the issue of her remission. O woman ! great was thy sin, great was Christ's pardoning grace, and great was thy joy and comfort : *Thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace*.

CHAP. VIII.

AND it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God : and the twelve were with him.

Observe here, The great work and business, which not only the apostles, but Christ himself was engaged in, and employed about, namely, preaching the gospel, those glad tidings of salvation to a lost world. Where note, That Christ himself laboured in this work of public preaching; he did not send forth his apostles as his curates to work and sweat in the vineyard, whilst he himself took his ease at home; but he accompanieth them himself, yea, he goes before them himself in this great and excellent work: *Jesus went preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, and the twelve were with him.* Learn thence, That preaching of the gospel is a great and necessary work, incumbent upon all the ministers of Christ, let their dignity and preeminence in the church be what it will. Surely none of the servants are above their Lord and Master! Did he labour in the word and doctrine? well may they. Observe, 2. The places where Christ and his apostles preached, not only in the populous cities, but in the poor country villages: *They went through every city and village preaching the gospel.* Some will preach the gospel, provided they may preach at court, or in the capital cities of the nation; but the poor country villages are overlooked by them. Our Saviour and his apostles were not of this mind: 'tis true, they were itinerary preachers, we are settled; but be the place never so mean and obscure, and the people never so rude and barbarous, we must not think it beneath the greatest of us to exercise our ministry there, if God calls us thither: *Christ went through the villages, as well as cities, preaching.*

2 And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, 3. And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Amongst the number of those that did accompany our Saviour and his apostles, mention is here made of a certain woman, who had been healed by Christ of evil spirits and infirmities; that is, of spiritual and corporeal diseases, for the Jews were wont to call vices and evil habits by the name of devils, as the devil of pride, the devil of malice, &c. Now as concerning these women's following of Christ, and

administering to him, several circumstances are observable; as, 1. That women did make up a considerable number of Christ's followers, aye, and of his apostles' followers too: *The devout women not a few,* Acts xvii. 4. And verily it is no disgrace or shame, but matter of glory, and cause of thankfulness, if our ministry be attended by, and blest unto, the weaker sex. I believe in many of our congregations, and at most of our communions, are found two women for one man; God grant them knowledge answerable to their zeal, and obedience proportionable to their devotion. Observe, 2. One of these women that followed Christ was *Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward.* What! one of Herod's family transplanted into Christ's household! O the freeness of the grace of God! Even in the worst societies and places God has a number to stand up for his name, and bear witness to his truth: we read of a Joseph in Pharaoh's court; of an Obadiah in Ahab's court; of a Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court; of a church in Nero's house; and of a Joanna here in bloody Herod's family, who had put John the Baptist to death. Observe, 3. The holy courage and resolution of our Saviour's female followers. No doubt they met with taunts and jeers, with scoffs and scorn enough, and perhaps from their husbands too, for following the carpenter's son, and a few fishermen; but this does not damp, but inflame, their zeal. The Holy Ghost acquaints us with several instances of masculine courage and manly resolution in the women that followed Christ as his female disciples. At our Saviour's trial, the women clave to him, when his disciples fled from him; they accompanied him to his cross, they assisted at his funeral, they attended his hearse to the grave, they watched his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night nor the rudeness of the soldiers. These feeble women had more courage than all the apostles. Learn, That courage is the special and peculiar gift of God; and where he gives courage, it is not in man to make afraid. Observe, 4. The pious and charitable care of these holy women, to supply the wants and outward necessities of our Saviour: *They ministered unto him of their substance.* Where note, 1. The great poverty of Christ: he lived upon the basket, he would not honour the world so far as to have any part of it in his own hand, but was beholden to others for what he ate and drank; yet trust

we not suppose that either Christ or his apostles were common beggars, but it is probable there was a bag or common purse amongst them, which upon occasion supplied their necessities; and there were certain *αδελφαι*, sisters, or christian women, as the learned Dr. Hammond observes, who accompanied Christ and his apostles in their travels, and provided necessities for them, when they went up and down, preaching the gospel. Note also, 2. The condescending grace and humility of Christ; he was not ashamed either of these women's following of him, or administering to him, because of their former vicious course of life; it is not what we formerly were, but what we now are, that Christ considers; it is a glory to him, to have great and notorious sinners brought to a closure and compliance with him. The reproach is not that they have been sinners, for Christ did not give himself for a people that were pure and holy, without spot or wrinkle, but to make them so by his word and Spirit, *Eph.* v. 26. Christ is only ashamed of those that eat of his bread, and lift up the heel against him.

4 And when much people gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: 5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. 8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The design and scope of this parable is to show, what are the causes of men's improving or not improving under the hearing of the word, and to let us know that there are three sorts of bad hearers, and but one good one. The careless and inconsiderate hearer, is like the *highway ground*, where the seed is trodden down and trampled upon. Hard-hearted sinners, whom the mollifying word doth not soften; these are

like *stony ground*, where the seed takes no root, the word makes no impression. Those whose heads and hearts are stuffed with the cares of the world, are like the *thorny ground*, in which the seed is choked, which would fructify to an holy immortality: this is the scope of the parable. Now from the subject matter of it, learn, 1. That by the *sower* you are to understand Christ and his apostles, and their successors, the ministers of the gospel. Christ the principal Sower, they the subordinate seedsmen. Christ sows his own field, they sow his field; he sows his own seed, they his seed. Woe unto us if we sow our own seed, and not Christ's. Learn, 2. The seed sown is the word of God: fabulous legends and unwritten traditions, which the seedsmen of the church of Rome sow, are not seed, but chaff; or if seed, (for they fructify too fast in the minds of their people,) their own, not Christ's. Our Lord's fields must be all sown with his own seed, with no mixt grain. Learn thence, That the word preached is like the seed sown in the furrows of the fields. Seed is of a fructifying, growing, and increasing nature, has in it an active principle, and will spring up, if not killed by accidental injuries; such a quickening power has the word of God to regenerate and make alive dead souls, if we suffer it to take rooting in our hearts: yet is not this seed alike fruitful in every soil: all ground is not alike, neither doth the word fructify alike in the souls of men; there is a difference both from the nature of the soil, and the influence of the Spirit; for though no ground is naturally good, yet some is worse than other: nay, even the best ground doth not bring forth increase alike; some good ground brings forth an hundred-fold, others but sixty, and some but thirty. In like manner a christian may be a profitable hearer of the word, although he doth not bring forth so great a proportion of fruit as others, provided he bring forth as much as he can.

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? 10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Here we have the disciples' question, and our Saviour's reply: their inquiry is con-



cerning the sense and signification of the parable, they own their ignorance, and desire better information. It is no shame for the best of ministers, yea, for the best of men, to acknowledge their own ignorance of the mysteries of religion; and to attend upon the means of instruction, in order to their farther information. In our Saviour's answer, *To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God*, &c. observe, 1. That the doctrines of the gospel are great mysteries. 2. That it is an invaluable privilege rightly to understand and know gospel-mysteries. 3. That this privilege all are not sharers in, and partakers of, but only those to whom it is given. 4. That it is a righteous thing with God to give such persons over to farther blindness and ignorance in spiritual things, who wilfully reject the truth, and shut their eyes against the evidence of it. The Pharisees had all along shut their eyes, and said, they would not see; and now Christ closes their eyes judicially, and says they shall not see.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13 They on the rock are *they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. 14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15 But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Here our Saviour applies himself to interpret and explain the foregoing parable to his disciples; he tells them, *The seed is the word*; the *sower* is the preacher; the *soil*, or *ground*, is the heart and soul of man: some hearers he compares to the *highway ground*, in which the seed lies uncovered for want of the harrow of meditation; others to *stony ground*, in which

the word has no root; no root in their understanding, no root in their memories, in their wills, or in their affections, but they are instantly offended, either at the depth and profoundness of the word, or at the sanctity and strictness of the word, or else at the plainness and simplicity of it. Again, some hearers our Lord compares to *thorny ground*. Worldly desires and inordinate cares for the things of this life choke the word, as thorns overshadow the corn, draw away the heart of the earth from it, hinder the influence of the sun from cherishing it; the like ill effects have worldly affections and desires in the soul of man, rendering the seed of the word unfruitful. But the good christian hears the word attentively, keeps it retentively, believes it stedfastly, applies it particularly, practises it universally, and brings forth fruit perseveringly. Learn hence, 1. That no hearers are in Christ's account good bearers of the word, but such as bring forth fruit answerable to their hearing. 2. That a person may be a good hearer of the word in Christ's account, if he bring forth the best fruit he can, though not in so great a proportion as others do; as some ground brings forth thirty, some sixty, some an hundred-fold: in like manner do all the sincere hearers of the word; they all bring forth fruit, though not all alike; all in sincerity, though not all equally, and none to perfection. Learn, 3. That it is not sufficient that we do at present believe, approve, and practise the truth delivered to us, or that we are affected with the word, and receive it with some kind of joy, delight, and pleasure; unless we persist and persevere in obedience to all its precepts, and continue to bring forth fruit with patience.

16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17 For nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest; neither *any* thing hid that shall not be known and come abroad. 18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

In these words Christ declares his end and design in revealing unto his disciples the foregoing parable, and why he communicated to them the light of scripture knowledge and gospel mysteries, namely, that they may communicate it to others, and not keep it close unto themselves; even as the candle in an house diffuses and disperses its light to all that come within the reach of it. Such as are enlightened by God in any measure, with the knowledge and understanding of his word, ought not to conceal and hide this knowledge within themselves, but communicate it to others, and improve it for the good and benefit of others. Observe also, The argument which our Saviour makes use of to quicken his disciples to communicate their knowledge, and improve the grace they had received for the good and advantage of others. *To him that hath shall be given*, that is, such as improve their spiritual gifts, shall have them increased; such as improve them not shall have them blasted. Learn hence, That there is no such way to thrive in grace, and increase in gifts, as to exercise and improve them; he that hideth his talent, forfeits it, is in danger of losing it, and also of being punished for not improving it. Observe lastly, How our Lord shuts up this parable of the sower and the seed, with a cautionary direction to all his auditors, to take heed how they hear the word: *Take heed therefore how ye hear*. Such as would profit by hearing the word must diligently attend to the matter of the doctrine which they hear, and also to the manner how they hear. Such is the majesty and authority of the person who speaks to us in the word, such is the sublimity and spirituality of the matter, and so great is our danger if we miscarry under the word, that it nearly concerns us to take heed both what we hear, whom we hear, and how we hear.

19 Then came to him *his mother and his brethren*, and could not come at him for the press. 20 And it was told him *by certain*, which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Two things are here observable, 1. The

truth and verity of Christ's human nature: he had affinity and consanguinity with men, persons near in blood to him, by the mother's side, called here his kinsmen. Observe, 2. That Christ's spiritual kindred were much dearer to him than his natural. Alliance by faith is more valued by Christ, than alliance by blood: to hear Christ in the heart is greater honour than to carry him in the womb. Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is not denied us even now. Although we cannot see Christ, yet love him we may, his bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual presence is not denied to us. Though Christ be not ours in house, in arms, in affinity and consanguinity, yet in heart, in faith, in love, and service, he is or may be ours. Verily spiritual regeneration bringeth men into a more honourable relation to Christ, than natural generation ever did. O how dear are obedient christians to Christ! he prefers them in esteem before those of his own flesh and blood: *My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it*.

22 Now it came to pass, on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. 23 But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake. and they were filled *with water*, and were in jeopardy. 24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish! Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

Here observe, 1. Our Saviour and his disciples no sooner put forth to sea, but difficulties attend them, and danger overtakes them; a tempest arose, and that ship was covered with waves that Christ himself was in with his disciples. Learn hence, That the presence of Christ itself doth not

exempt his disciples and followers from trouble and danger. Here was a great tempest about the disciples' ears, though Christ himself was in their company. Observe, 2. The posture our Saviour was in when this tempest arose: being wearied with the labours of the day, he was laid down to sleep; thereby showing himself to be truly and really man; and that he not only took upon him the human nature, but the infirmities of that nature also; he was subject to pain and weariness, to hunger and thirst. Observe, 3. The disciples' application made to Christ: they awake him with a sad outcry, *Master, master, we perish*; here was faith mixed with human frailty. They believed that he could save them, but being asleep, they concluded he must be awaked before he could save them; whereas, though his human nature was asleep, yet his divine nature neither slumbered nor slept. Learn hence, That the prevalency of fear in a time of great and imminent danger, though it may evidence weakness of faith, yet it is no evidence of a total want of faith; in the midst of the disciples' fears, they believed Christ's power and ability to save them: *Master, save us, we perish*. Observe, 4. A double rebuke given by our Saviour, 1. To the winds. 2. To the fears of his disciples. *Christ rebuked the winds, and instantly they were calm*: when the sea was as furious as a mad-man, Christ with a single word calms it. Learn thence, That the most raging winds, and outrageous seas, cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ; Christ as God lays a law upon the most lawless creatures, even when they seem to act most lawlessly. Observe farther, Christ rebukes his disciples' fears, and their want of faith: *Why are you fearful? Where is your faith?* No sooner was the storm up, but their fears were up, and their faith was down. They forgot that the lord-high-admiral of the ocean was now on board their ship, and were as much overset with their boisterous passions, as the ship was with tempestuous winds; and accordingly, Christ rebukes the tempest within, before he calms the storm without; first he quickens their faith, then he quiets the seas. Note from hence, That great faith in the habit may appear but little in act and exercise. The disciples' faith, in forsaking all and following Christ, was great faith; but in this present act their faith was weak, through the prevalency of their fears. Oh the imperfect composition of the best of saints! Faith and fear will

take their turns, and act their several parts whilst we are here; ere long our fears will be vanquished, and our faith swallowed up in vision, our hopes in fruition. Then shall we obey with vigour, praise with cheerfulness, love without measure, fear without torment, trust without despondency. Lord, strengthen our faith in the belief of this desirable happiness, and set our souls a longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it.

26 And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. 27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee torment me not. 29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters: and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) 30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. 31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. 32 And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain; and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them: and he suffered them. 33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. 34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. 35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sit-

ting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 36 They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. 37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. 38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him. 40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people *gladly* received him: for they were all waiting for him.

This piece of history gives us a very sad relation of a person that was possessed of a legion of devils; we read of few, if any, in the Old Testament, that were thus possessed, but of many in the New. Our Saviour came into the world to destroy the works of the devil; therefore he suffered Satan to enter some human bodies, to show his divine power in casting him out. Observe here, 1. That the evil angels by their fall lost their purity, but not their power; for with God's permission they have power not only to enter men's bodies, and to possess them, but also to distemper their minds, and to drive them to frenzy and madness; such was the deplorable case here. Note, 2. That the reason why the evil angels do not oftener exert their power in doing mischief to the bodies and lives of men, is from the restraining power of God: the devil cannot do all the mischief he would, and he shall not do all he can. Observe, 3. The place where these evil spirits delighted to make their abode: *amongst the tombs or graves, places desolate, forlorn, and solitary*, which are apt to breed horror of mind, and to give advantage to temptation. From whence I gather, That it is very dangerous and unsafe for persons, especially in whom melancholy prevails, to give themselves too much to solitariness, to fre-

quent desolate places, and to affect being much alone; for it gives advantage to Satan to set upon them with powerful temptations. It is much better to frequent human society, especially to delight in the communion of the saints, by means whereof we may be more and more strengthened against Satan's temptations. Observe, 4. How the devils own Christ to be the Son of God, and pay unwilling worship and homage to him, yielding subjection to him as his slaves and vassals, not a free and voluntary service: *They cried out, and fell down before him, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?* Where, by calling him Jesus, they owned him to be a Saviour, but none of their Saviour: *What have we to do with thee, Jesus?* Oh! what an uncomfortable expression is this, to own Christ to be a Saviour, and at the same time to know and declare that he is none of our Saviour! *Quid est Deus, si non sit meus?* "What is God, if he be not my God?" What comfort in a Saviour, if he be not my Saviour? Observe, 5. What a multitude of evil spirits do enter into one man. Oh the extreme malice and enmity of the devil against mankind, in that so many evil spirits should at once afflict and torment a single person, even a legion, many thousands of them! Note likewise, The unity and agreement which is amongst these evil spirits in doing mischief; though there was a multitude of them in this one person, yet they have all but one name. We see the very devils have a sort of unity amongst themselves, and in their malicious and mischievous designs against mankind they are as one. Oh how happy were it, if good men were as united in their designs and endeavours for the glory of God, and the good of one another, as devils conspire and contrive against them! Observe, 6. The request which the devils make to Christ: *We beseech thee, torment us not.* From whence we may gather, 1. That there are torments appointed to the spiritual nature of evil angels. 2. That the evil angels, or devils, are not so full of torment as they shall be, although they are as full of sin and discontent as they can be; there will be a time when their torments shall be increased; therefore they pray, *Torment us not before the time*; that is, do not increase our torments before the appointed time of their increase. Observe, 7. The devil's request for permission and leave to go into the herd of swine. Where note,

1. The devil's malice: he will hurt the poor beasts, rather than not hurt at all. 2. His powerful restraint: he cannot hurt a poor pig without a permission: *Suffer us to enter.* Satan's malice indeed is infinite, but his power is bounded: it is *potestas sub potestate*, a power under a power; if he could not hurt the swine, much less can he afflict the children of men without leave. Observe, 8. How Satan's request is yielded to by our Saviour: *he suffered them to go into the swine*, not to gratify their desire in doing mischief; but, first, hereby Christ showed his power over the devils, that they could not act without his permission and leave; next, to show how great the malice and power of the devil is, if not restrained; and lastly, that the miracle of casting out so many devils might appear to be the greater. Learn hence, That sometimes Almighty God, for wise ends and just causes, doth suffer the devil to enjoy his desire, in doing mischief unto the creatures: *Jesus said unto them, Go.* Observe, 9. What a bad effect this miracle had upon the minds of the Gadarenes; instead of believing and owning Christ's divine power, the loss of their swine enrages them, and makes them desire Christ's departure from them. Learn, That carnal hearts prefer their swine before their Saviour, and would rather lose Christ's presence than their worldly profit: *They besought him to depart from them.* Sad is the condition of those from whom Christ departs; more sad the condition of such who say unto Christ, Depart; but most sad the condition of them who beseech and entreat Christ to depart from them: thus did the Gadarenes here, and we do not read that ever Christ returned more to them. Observe, 10. How desirous the possessed man was to continue with Christ after he was come to himself: *He prayed that he might be with him.* This he might desire, partly to testify his thankfulness to Christ, partly out of fear of being re-possessed again by Satan, or perhaps to have the opportunity of hearing Christ's doctrine, and seeing his miracles: for such as have once tasted that the Lord is gracious, and experienced the pleasure and profit of Christ's company, are very desirous of the continuance of it, and exceeding loth to part with it. However, our Saviour at this time did not think fit to suffer him, knowing that more glory would redound to God by publishing this miracle to his friends. Christ expects, after eminent deliverances

wrought for us, that we should be the publishers of his praises, and declare to all, far and near, the great and wonderful things which he has done for us. Observe lastly, How Christ ascribes that power to God, by which he had wrought this miracle of healing: *Shew how great things God has done for thee.* From whence the Socinians infer, that had he been God most high, and the author of that power by which he wrought this miracle, he would have ascribed it to himself. Answer, Christ doth this, as not seeking his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him; that is, as executing his prophetic office in his Father's name, and casting out devils by that Spirit which he had received from his Father.

41 And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: 42 For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. (But as he went, the people thronged him.)

Observe here, 1. The person described who came to Christ on behalf of his sick daughter: by his name *Jairus*; by his office, *a ruler of the synagogue*; by his gesture, *he fell down at Jesus's feet*: this gesture of his was not only a sign of tender affection in him towards his daughter, but also an evidence of his faith in our blessed Saviour; he believed him either to be God, or an extraordinary man, who had a miraculous power of healing. Observe, 2. How readily Christ complies with Jairus's request: *Jesus went with him.* Although his faith was but weak, yet our Saviour doth not reject him, or deny his suit. O how ready should we be to go to Christ in all our distresses, who is so ready to hear, and so forward to help us, if we seek him in sincerity, though our faith be weak and feeble! Observe, 3. The great humility of our blessed Saviour in suffering himself to be thronged with poor people: much people followed him and thronged him. O humble and lowly Saviour! how free was thy conversation from pride and haughtiness! how willing to converse with the meanest of the people for their advantage! Christ did not only suffer them to come near him, but even to throng him. Let not then the greatest persons upon earth despise or disdain the poorest of the

people; but look upon some with an eye of favour, upon others with an eye of pity, upon none with an eye of contempt.

43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. 45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. 47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and, falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touch'd him, and how she was healed immediately. 48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace.

As our Saviour was on his way to Jairus's house, a diseased woman cometh behind him, toucheth his clothes, and is presently healed. The virtue lay not in her finger, but in her faith; or rather in Christ, which her faith instrumentally drew forth. Observe, 1. The diseased woman, one with a bloody flux; let women here take notice of the miseries which the sin of the first woman brought upon all women; amongst which this is one, that it has made their bodies subject to preternatural issues and fluxes of blood. Observe, 2. The long continuance of this disease, *twelve years*: it pleases God to lay long and tedious afflictions upon some of his children in this life, and particularly to keep some of them a very long time under bodily weakness, to manifest his power in supporting them, and to magnify his mercy in delivering them. Observe, 3. This poor woman was found in the use of means: she sought to physicians for help, and is not blamed for so doing, although she spent all she had upon them. The use and help of physic is by no means to be neglected by us in times of

sickness, especially in dangerous diseases of the body: to trust to means is to neglect God; and to neglect the means is to condemn God. The health of our body ought to be dear unto us, and all lawful means used both to preserve it, to recover it, and to confirm it. Observe, 4. The actings of this poor woman's faith: her disease was unclean by the ceremonial law, and she is to be separated from society: accordingly she is ashamed to appear before Christ, but comes behind him to touch his clothes; being firmly persuaded that Christ had a power communicated to him miraculously to cure incurable diseases; and how our Saviour encouraged her faith, he saith, *Thy faith hath made thee whole*. Learn hence, That faith oft-times meets with a better welcome from Christ, than it did or could expect; this poor woman came to Christ trembling, but went away triumphing. Observe, 5. Christ would have this miracle discovered; he therefore says, *Who touched me?* For I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. Christ says this, first, in reference to himself, to manifest his divine power, that by the touch of his clothes he could cure such an incurable disease. Secondly, in relation to the woman, that she might have opportunity to give God the praise and glory for the cure. And, thirdly, with respect to Jairus, that his faith might be strengthened in belief of Christ's power to raise his daughter.

49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. 50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. 51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. 52 And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not: she is not dead, but sleepeth. 53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. 55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway:

and he commanded to give her meat.  
56 And her parents were astonished ; but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

Observe here, 1. The doleful news brought to Jairus's ear: *Thy daughter is dead.* The Lord doth sometimes suffer the faith and patience of his children to be greatly exercised and tried. The loss of dear relations, particularly of children, especially of an only child, is one of the greatest sorrows of human life ; a trial which has often shocked an ordinary patience and constancy of mind. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's reasonable word of advice and comfort: *Fear not, only believe.* Christ stands ready to comfort believers in the hour of their greatest trials and temptations. Observe, 3. Christ's application of himself in order to the raising to life Jairus's dead daughter. And here, 1. He goes into the house only with three of his disciples, and the father and the mother of the maid, which was sufficient to bear witness of the truth of the miracle. Our Saviour to avoid all show of vain-glory, would not work this miracle publicly before all the people. 2. Our Saviour rebukes them for the show they made of immoderate grief and sorrow for the dead damsel: they wept and wailed greatly, with minstrels making a noise, say the other evangelists, according to the custom of the Heathens, who, by a mournful sort of music, did seek to stir up the passion of grief at their funerals. To mourn immoderately for the dead is an heathenish custom and practice; 'tis hurtful to the living, 'tis dishonourable to the dead; nor is it an argument of more love, but an evidence of less grace. 3. Christ adds a reason for this rebuke given by him: *For the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth; Vobis mortua, mihi dormit;* 'She is dead to you, but asleep to me;' not so dead as to be beyond my power to raise her to life. Souls departed are under the conduct of angels to their several regions of bliss or misery. It is very probable that the soul of this damsel was under the guard of angels, near her dead body, waiting the pleasure of God, in order to its disposal, either to restore it again to its body or to translate it to its eternal mansion. Observe farther, The nature of death in general, and of the saints' death in particular; 'tis a sleep. Sleep is a state of rest; sleep is a sudden surprisal; in sleep there is an insensible passage of our time; the person sleep-

ing shall certainly awake. O how much is it our wisdom to prepare for the bed of the grave; and so to live, that when we lie down in it, there may be nothing to disturb our rest! Observe farther, With what facility and ease our Saviour raises the dead damsel with a word speaking, and St. Mark tells us what the words were; *Talitha cumi*, Syriac words, to show the truth of the miracle; not like a conjuror muttering a charm in an unknown tongue. The miracles which Christ wrought were real miracles, and carried their own evidence along with them. Observe lastly, The charge given by our Saviour not to publish this miracle; he charged them to tell no man what was done, that is, divulge it not imprudently to such of the scribes and Pharisees as would not be convinced by it, but only cavil at it, and be the more enraged against him for it, and seek his death before his appointed time was come. Again, Tell it no man unseasonably, and all at once, but gradually and by degrees: for it was the will of God, that the divine glory of Christ should not be manifested to the world all at once, and on the sudden, but by little and little, during his state of humiliation; for his resurrection was the time appointed by God for the full manifestation of Christ's Godhead, Rom. i. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.*

#### CHAP. IX.

**T**HEN he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. 3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. 4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. 5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet, for a testimony against them. 6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

We heard before, chap. vi. 13. of our

Saviour's choosing his twelve apostles, and their several names ; they were first chosen disciples to be with Christ, to learn of him, and be instructed by him, and to be witnesses of what he said and did. Now after some time thus spent in preparing and fitting them for public service, our Saviour sends them forth to preach the gospel, and gives them a power to confirm their doctrine by miracles. Observe here, 1. The person that sends the apostles forth to preach the gospel : it is Christ himself. Learn thence, That none ought to take upon them the office of preaching, or any other ministerial function of the church, till thereunto called by Christ himself. The apostles were called by Christ, and immediately sent forth by himself. The ministers of the gospel are now called mediately, and receive authority from Christ by the hand of the governors of the church. Observe, 2. The power given to the apostles by our Saviour to work miracles, for confirming that doctrine which they preached : *He gave them power over unclean spirits, &c.* Now this miraculous power given to the apostles was necessary, partly to procure reverence to their persons, being poor and unlearned men ; but principally to gain credit and authority to their doctrine ; for the doctrine of faith in the Messiah as now come, and exhibited in the flesh, being a strange and new doctrine to the Jews, the truth and certainty of it was to be extraordinarily ratified by miracles, which are the broad seal of heaven, to testify that such doctrine comes from God. Observe, 3. The charge here given by Christ to his apostles at the time of their sending forth ; and this is threefold, First, Touching their preparation for the journey : he forbids them to take much care, or to spend much time, in furnishing themselves with victuals, money, or clothes ; because they were to finish their journey speedily, and to return again to Christ their Master. This command of our Saviour to his apostles not to encumber themselves, when going forth to preach the gospel, teaches his ministers their duty, to free themselves as much as possibly they can from worldly incumbrances, which may hinder them in their ministerial services, 2 Tim. ii. 4. *No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.* Secondly, Touching their lodging in their journey : Christ advises them not to change it, during their stay in one place ; but *into whatsoever house they entered, they should there continue till they departed out of the*

*place, that so they might avoid all show of lightness and inconstancy, and testify all gravity and stayedness in their behaviour ; this being a special mean to gain reverence to their persons, and authority to their doctrine.* Thirdly, Christ gives a special charge to his apostles concerning their carriage toward such as should refuse to give entertainment to them and their doctrine : they were to denounce the judgments of God against such contemners, *by shaking off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them.* This action was emblematical, signifying that Almighty God would in like manner shake them off, as the vilest dust ; for wherever the word is preached, it is for a testimony, either a testimony for, or against, a people ; for if the dust of a minister's feet whilst alive, and the ashes of his grave when dead, do bear witness against the despisers of his gospel, their sermons much more.

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him : and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some that John was risen from the dead ; 8 And of some, That Eliash had appeared ; and of others, That one of the old prophets was risen again. 9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded ; but who is this, of whom I hear such things ? And he desired to see him.

The history of the holy Baptist's beheading by Herod, is briefly here hinted at, by St. Luke, but not so largely set forth by him as we find it by St. Matthew, chap. xiv. and St. Mark chap. vi. see the notes there. That which St. Luke takes particular notice of is, that great perplexity of mind which Herod's guilty conscience did occasion ; he had murdered John, and now is afraid his ghost haunted him ; *Herod was perplexed.* Learn hence, That guilt is naturally troublesome and uneasy : it disturbs the peace and serenity of the mind, and fills the soul with storms and thunder. Guilt is always full of fear ; every thing affrights the guilty. A bad man is a terror to himself, and needs no farther disquietment than what his own guilty conscience doth occasion him.

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert



place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him : and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

St. Luke here gives a short account of several material passages, as, 1. Concerning the apostles' return to Christ after their mission and sending forth ; they acquaint their Master how they had executed their office, and discharged the trust he had reposed in them. 2. He withdraws privately into a desert place from the multitude, that he might enjoy himself and his disciples, but there the people find him out, and flock after him ; and Christ, whose meat it was by day, and asleep by night, to do good, embraces the opportunity, bestowing upon their souls instruction, reproof, and counsel : upon their bodies, health and healing : teaching us by the example to mix spiritual alms with bodily relief. We must be in fee with the body sometimes, that we may come at the soul. Happy is that christian whom God hath made both able and willing to intermix spiritual alms with corporeal, and knows how to feed two at once, soul and body both ! This is the duty of all, but especially of spiritual persons. The Lord give us wisdom and grace to manage it to advantage !

12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals ; for we are here in a desert place. 13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes ; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. 14 (For they were about five thousand men.) And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15 And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before

the multitude. 17 And they did eat, and were all filled : and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

This miracle of our Saviour's feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by all the evangelists, and in the history of it we have these observable particulars : 1. The seasonable expression of the disciples' pity towards the multitude, who had long fasted, and wanted now the ordinary comforts and supports of life ; it well becomes the ministers of Christ to have respect to the bodily wants as well as to the spiritual necessities of their people. Observe, 2. The motion which the disciples make to Christ on behalf of the multitude : *Send them away, that they may go into the towns and country, and get victuals.* Here was a strong charity, but a weak faith ; a strong charity in desiring the people's relief, but a weak faith in supposing that they could no other way be relieved, but by sending them away ; forgetting that Christ, who had healed the multitude miraculously, could also feed them miraculously whenever he pleased ; all things being equally easy to an almighty power. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's strange reply to the disciples' request : *They need not depart, give ye them to eat.* Need not depart, why ? The people must either feed or famish ; victuals they must have, and a dry desert will afford none ; yet says Christ to his disciples, *Give ye them to eat.* Alas poor disciples ! they had nothing for themselves to eat, how then should they give the multitude to eat ? When Christ requires of us what we of ourselves are unable to perform, it is to discover to us our own impotency and weakness, to provoke us to look up to him, and to depend by faith on his almighty power. Observe, 4. What a poor and slender provision the Lord of the whole earth has for himself and his family : *five barley loaves, and two fishes* : teaching us, that these bodies of ours must be fed, but not pampered. Our belly must not be our master, much less our god. The end of food is to sustain nature ; we must not stifle her with a glutinous variety. And as the quality of the victuals was plain, so the quantity of it was small ; *five loaves, and two fishes* : well might the disciples say, *What are they among so many ?* The eye of sense and reason sees an utter impossibility of those effects which faith can easily apprehend.

and a divine power more easily produce. Observe, 5. How Christ, the great master of the feast, doth marshal his guests: *He commands them all to sit down by fifties in a company.* None of them reply, "Sit down! but to what? Here are the mouths, but where's the meat? We may soon be set, but whence shall we be served?" Not a word like this, but they obey and expect. Lord! how easy it is to trust thy providence, and rely upon thy power, when there is corn in the barn, bread in the cupboard, money in the purse; but when our stores are empty, when we have nothing in hand, then to depend upon an invisible bounty, is a noble act of faith indeed. Observe, 6. The actions performed by our blessed Saviour: *He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and they to the multitude.* 1. *He blessed them*, teaching us by his example never to use or receive the good creatures of God, without prayer and praise; never to sit down to our food as a beast to his fodder. 2. *Christ brake the loaves*: he could have multiplied them whole. Why then would he rather do it in the breaking? Perhaps to teach us that we may rather expect his blessing in the distribution of his bounty, than in the reservation of it. Scattering is the way to increasing, liberality is the way to riches. 3. *Christ gave the loaves thus broken to the disciples, that they might distribute to the multitude.* But why did Christ distribute by the disciples' hands? Doubtless to gain respect to his disciples from the people: and the same course doth our Lord take in a spiritual distribution. He that could feed the world by his own immediate hand, chooses rather by the hand of his ministers to divide the bread of life amongst his people. Observe, 7. The certainty and greatness of this miracle: *They did all eat, and were filled*; they did all eat, not a crumb or a bit, but a satiety and fulness; all that were hungry did eat, and all that did eat were satisfied; and yet *twelve baskets of fragments remain*: more is left than was at first set on. 'Tis hard to say which was the greatest miracle; the miraculous eating or the miraculous leaving. If we consider what they left, we may wonder that they eat any thing; if what they ate, that they left any thing. Observe lastly, These fragments, though of barley-loaves and fish-bones, must not be lost, but at our Saviour's command gathered up: the great Housekeeper of the world

will not allow the loss of his oats. Lord! how tremendous will their accounts be, who having large and plentiful estates, do consume them upon their lusts! How will they wish they had been born to poverty and want, when they appear to make up their account before God;

18 And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? 19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, That one of the old prophets is risen again. 20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answered said, The Christ of God. 21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; 22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

These verses relate to us a private conference which our Saviour had with his disciples, touching their own and others' opinion concerning himself. Where observe, 1. Our Saviour's enquiry, what the generality of the people thought and said of him: *Whom do men say that I am?* Not as if Christ were ignorant, or did vain-gloriously enquire after the opinion of the multitude; but his intention and design was to settle and more firmly establish his disciples in the belief of his being the true and promised Messias. The disciples tell him, some took him to be *John the Baptist*; some, *Elias*; some, *one of the prophets*. 'Tis no new thing, it seems, to find diversity of judgments and opinions concerning Christ and the affairs of his kingdom. Observe, 2. Peter, as the mouth of all the apostles, and in their names, makes a full and open profession of Christ, acknowledging him to be the true and promised Messias: *Thou art the Christ of God.* Learn thence, that the veil of Christ's human nature did not keep the eye of his disciples' faith from discerning him to be truly and really God: *Thou art the Christ of God.* Observe, 3. The charge and special injunction given by Christ to *tell no man of him*: that is, not commonly to publish, and openly to declare him to be the Son of God, because being in his state

of humiliation, the glory of his divinity was to be concealed till his resurrection; he was then *declared to be the Son of God with power*, Rom. i. 4. Observe, lastly, The great wisdom of our Saviour in acquainting his disciples with the near approach of his death and sufferings: *The Son of man must suffer many things, &c.* This our Saviour did, 1. To prevent that scandal and offence which otherwise they might have taken at his sufferings. 2. The better to fit and prepare them to bear that great trial when it did come. 3. To correct the error which they had entertained concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messias, and that he was to be a great and mighty prince here upon earth; for these reasons did Christ frequently acquaint his disciples with his sufferings.

23 And he said to *them* all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Observe here, 1. How our Saviour recommends his religion to every person's election and choice, not compelling any one by force and violence to embrace or entertain it: *If any man will be my disciple*: that is, if any man chooses and resolves to be a christian. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's terms propounded: namely, self-denial, gospel-suffering, and gospel-service. 1. Self-denial: *Let him deny himself*; by which we are not to understand either the denying of our senses in matters of faith, or in the renouncing of our reasons in matters of religion, but a willingness to part with all our earthly comforts and temporal enjoyments for the sake of Christ, when called thereunto. They to whom we bear the greatest natural affection, even the wife of our bosom, and the offspring of our bowels, and those to whom we yield the highest reverence, and to whose commands we owe most entire obedience, as our fathers and mothers; if the authority of natural, civil, or ecclesiastical superiors should combine to tempt us to do what Christ forbids, yet Christ must be loved more than these, and obeyed before all these; yea all these must be comparatively hated in respect of him. Farther, this precept requires us to deny our honour and reputation, our wealth and outward estate, our whole subsistence, and

all our temporal good things, even life itself, when the interest of Christ and religion calls for it; otherwise we cannot be his disciples. 2. Gospel sufferings: he must take up his cross daily; an allusion to a Roman custom; when a malefactor was to be crucified, he took his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution. Here note, That not the taking of the cross, but patient bearing of it, when God has made it, and laid it upon our shoulder, is the duty enjoined: *let him take up his cross*. 3. Gospel-service: *Let him follow me*, says Christ; that is, obey my commands, and imitate my example. He must set my life and doctrine continually before him, and be daily correcting and reforming of his life by that rule and pattern. Observe, 3. The arguments urged by our Saviour to induce men to a willingness to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ and his holy religion: *He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that is willing to lose his life for the sake of the gospel, shall find it*: intimating to us, 1. That the love of this temporal life is a great temptation to men to deny Christ, and to renounce his holy religion. 2. That the surest way to attain eternal life, is cheerfully to lay down our temporal life, when the glory of Christ, and the honour of religion, require it at our hands.

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Here our Saviour goes on to show the folly of those that for saving their temporal lives will expose their eternal life, or the life of their souls, to hazard and danger, yea, sometimes by refusing to lay down our temporal life for Christ, we lose that also; which renders it the greatest folly in the world to refuse to part with any enjoyment, even life itself, at the call and command of Christ.

26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

That is, whosoever shall deny and disown me, either in my person, in my doctrine, or my members, for any fear or favour of man, he shall with shame be disowned by me, and rejected of me, at the great day. There are two passions which

came men to disown Christ in the day of temptation ; namely, fear and shame. Many good men have been overcome by the former, as St. Peter and others ; but we find not any good man in scripture guilty of the latter, namely, that denied Christ out of shame : this argues a rotten, unsound, and corrupt heart. If any man think it beneath his honour and quality to own the opposed truths, and despised members of Christ, Christ will think it beneath him to own such persons at the great day. Learn hence, 1. That such as are ashamed of Christ's doctrine, or members, are in God's account ashamed of Christ himself. 2. That such as either for fear dare not, or for shame will not, own the doctrine and members of Christ now, shall certainly find Christ ashamed to own and confess them at the great day.

27 But I tell you of a truth, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.

There is a threefold sense and interpretation of these words given by expositors. 1. Some refer the words to the times of the gospel after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when the gospel was propagated far and near, and the kingdom of God came with power. Learn thence, That where the gospel is powerfully preached, and cheerfully obeyed, there Christ cometh most gloriously in his kingdom. 2. Others understand these words of Christ's coming and exercising his kingly power in the destruction of Jerusalem, which some of the apostles then standing by lived to see. 3. Others (as most agreeable to the context) understand the words with reference to our Saviour's transfiguration ; as if he had said, " Some of you, (meaning Peter, James, and John,) shall shortly see me upon mount Tabor, and that in such splendour and glory, as shall be a prelude, a shadow and representation, of that glory which I shall appear in, when I shall come with power to judge the world at the great day." And whereas our Saviour saith not, there are some standing here which shall not die, but *which shall not taste of death*, till they have seen this glorious sight ; this implies two things, 1. That after they had seen this transfiguration, they must taste of death as well as others. 2. That they should but taste of it, and no more. From whence learn, 1. That the most renowned

servants of Christ, for faith, holiness, and service, must at length, in God's appointed time, taste and have experience of death, as well as others. 3. That although they must taste, yet they shall but taste of death ; they shall not drink of the dregs of that bitter cup ; though they fall by the hand of death, yet shall they not be hurt by it, but in the very fall be victorious over it.

28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. 30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias : 31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep ; and when they were awake, they saw his glory and the two men that stood with him. 33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here : and let us make three tabernacles ; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias : not knowing what he said. 34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them : and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son : hear him. 36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

Here we have recorded the history of our holy Saviour's transfiguration ; when he laid, as it were, the garments of our frail humanity aside for a little season ; and put on the robes of his divine glory to demonstrate and testify the truth of his divinity ; for his divine glory was an evidence of his divine nature, and also an emblem of that glory which he and his disciples, and all

his faithful servants and followers, shall enjoy together in heaven. Observe, 1. The design of our Saviour in this his transfiguration, namely, to confirm his disciples' faith in the truth of his divine nature: he was therefore pleased to suffer the rays of his divinity to dart forth before their eyes, so far as they were able to bear it; his face shined with a pleasing brightness, and his raiment with such a glorious lustre, as did at once both delight and dazzle the eyes of his disciples. Observe, 2. The choice which our Saviour makes of the witnesses of his transfiguration: his three disciples, Peter, James, and John. But why disciples? why three disciples, and why these three? 1. Why disciples? Because his transfiguration was a type of heaven: Christ vouchsafes therefore the earnest and first fruits of that glory only to saints upon earth, on whom he intended to bestow the full crop in due time. 2. Why three disciples? Because these were sufficient to witness the truth of this miracle. Judas was unworthy of this favour, yet, lest he should murmur or be discontented, others are left out as well as he. 3. But why these three rather than others? Probably, 1. Because these three were more eminent for great zeal and love towards Christ: now the most eminent manifestations of glory are made to those that are most excelling in grace. 2. Because these three disciples were to be witnesses of Christ's agony and passion, to prepare them for which, they are here made witnesses of his transfiguration. This glorious vision upon mount Tabor fitted them to abide the terror of mount Calvary. Observe, 3. The glorious attendants upon our Saviour at his transfiguration: they were two; those two, men; those two men, Moses and Elias. This being but a glimpse of heaven's glory, and not a full manifestation of it, only two of the glorified saints attended it, and these two attendants are not two angels, but two men; because men were more nearly concerned than angels in what was done. But why Moses and Elias, rather than any other men? 1. Because Moses was the giver of the law, and Elias the chief of the prophets; now both these attending upon Christ, did show the consent of the law and the prophets with Christ, and their accomplishment and fulfilling in him. 2. Because these two men were the most laborious servants of Christ: both adventured their lives in God's cause, and therefore were highly honoured by him; for those that

honour him he will honour. Observe, 4. The carriage and behaviour of the disciples upon this great occasion: 1. They supplicate Jesus: they do not pray to Moses or Elias, but to Christ: *Master, it is good being here*. O what a ravishing comfort and satisfaction is the communion and fellowship of the saints! but the presence of Christ amongst them, renders their joys transporting. 2. They proffer their service to further the continuance of what they did enjoy: *Let us make three tabernacles*: saints will stick at no cost or pains for the enjoyment of Christ's presence and his people's company. Learn hence, That a glimpse of heaven's glory is sufficient to raise a soul into ecstasy and to make it out of love with worldly company. 2. That we are apt to desire more of heaven upon earth than God will allow us; we would have the heavenly glory come down to us, but are not willing by death to go up to that. Observe, 5. How a cloud was put before the disciples' eyes, when the divine glory was manifested to them, partly to allay the lustre and replendency of that glory which they were swallowed up with: the glory of heaven is insupportable in this imperfect state, we cannot bear it unveiled; and partly did this cloud come to hinder their looking and prying farther into this glory. We must be content to behold God through a cloud darkly here; ere long we shall see him face to face. Observe, 6. The testimony given out of the cloud by God the Father, concerning Jesus Christ his Son: *This is my beloved Son, hear him*. Where note, 1. The dignity of his person; he is *my Son*, for nature co-essential, and for duration co-eternal with his Father. 2. The endearedness of his relation; *He is my beloved Son*, because of his conformity to me, and compliance with me: likeness is the cause of love, and an union or harmony of wills causes a mutual endearing of affection. 3. The authority of his doctrine; *Hear ye him*: "not Moses and Elias, who were servants, but Christ my Son, whom I have authorized and appointed to be the great prophet and teacher of my church; therefore adore him as my Son, and believe in him as your Saviour, and hear him as your lawgiver." The obedient ear honours Christ more than either the gazing eye, the adoring knee, or the applauding tongue.

37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come

down from the hill, much people met him. 38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child: 39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again; and bruising him hardly departeth from him. 40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. 41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. 42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him: and Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

Observe here, 1. The person brought to Christ for help and healing; one bodily possessed by Satan, who rent and tore him, but rather to torment than to despatch him. O how does Satan delight to do hurt to the bodies, as well as the souls, of mankind! Lord, abate his power, since his malice will not be abated. Observe, 2. The person who represented his sad condition to our Saviour; his compassionate father, who kneeled down and cried out. Need will make a person both humble and eloquent; every one has a tongue to speak for himself, happy he that keeps a tongue for others. Observe, 3. The physicians which this distressed person is brought unto: first to the disciples, and then to Jesus. We never apply ourselves importunately to the God of power, till we despair of the creature's help. But what hindered the disciples that they could not cast out this evil spirit? Why, it was their unbelief; *O faithless generation.* Learn thence, That the great obstacle and obstruction of all blessings, both spiritual and temporal, coming to us, is our wretched infidelity and unbelief. Observe, 4. The sovereign power and absolute authority which Christ had when on earth over the devil and his angels: *Jesus rebuked him, cast him out, and charged him to return no more into him.* This was a proof and demonstration of the Godhead of our Saviour, that, in his own name, that, by his own power and authority, he could and did cast the devils out.

43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. 45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

Observable it is how frequently our Saviour forewarned his disciples of his approaching sufferings, and as the time of his suffering drew nearer, he did more frequently warn them of his death. But all this was little enough to arm them against the scandal of the cross; and to reconcile them to the thoughts of his suffering condition; how an ordinary prophet should be delivered into the hands of men they could easily understand, but how the Messiah should be so treated they could not apprehend; for the disciples had taken up the common opinion, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, and should conquer and reign here upon earth; and how to reconcile this with being killed, they could no ways apprehend; and they were afraid to be too particular in their enquiries about it. Now, from Christ's so frequently warning his disciples of his approaching sufferings, we may gather, That we can never hear, either too often or too much, of the doctrine of the cross, nor be too frequently instructed in our duty to prepare for a suffering state; as Christ went from his cross to his crown, from a state of abasement to a state of exaltation, so must all his disciples and followers expect likewise.

46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, 48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

It may justly seem a wonder, that when our blessed Saviour discoursed so frequent-

ly with his disciples about his sufferings, that they should at the same time be disputing among themselves about precedence and pre-eminency, which of them should be the greatest, the first in place, and the highest in dignity and honour; but from this instance we may learn, That the holiest and best of men are too prone to ambition, ready to catch at the bait of honour, to affect a precedence before, and superiority over others. Here the apostles themselves were touched with the itch of ambition; to cure this, our Saviour sets before them a little child, as the proper emblem of humility; showing that they ought to be as free from pride and ambition as a young child, which affects nothing of precedence. Such as are of the highest eminency in the church, ought to be singularly adorned with the grace of humility, looking upon themselves as lying under the greatest obligation to be most eminently useful and serviceable to the church's good.

49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. 50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Observe here, 1. St. John's relation of a matter of fact to our Saviour; namely, his forbidding one to cast out devils in Christ's name, that did not follow Christ as they did; for though only the disciples which followed Christ had a commission to work miracles, yet were there others, no enemies to Christ, who, in imitation of his disciples, did attempt to do the like; and God was pleased, for the honour of his Son, in whose name they cast out devils, to give them sometimes success. Observe, 2. The action of the disciples towards this person: We forbade him, *because he followed not with us*. Where is observable, their rashness in forbidding him of their own heads, before they had consulted Christ about it; and their envy and emulation, in that they were grieved and discontented that good was done, because they did not do it. It is as hard a matter to look upon the gifts of others without envy, as it is to look upon our own without pride. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's reply: *Forbid him not*. Because our Saviour knew, that this action of casting out devils in his name would some ways redound to his glory, although he

undertook the matter without dissection from Christ. We ought not to censure and condemn those, who do that which is good in itself, though they fail in the manner of their doing it.

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

The time now drew on, wherein our Saviour was to be received up into heaven, and accordingly he sets his face to go to Jerusalem, that he might there suffer, and from thence ascend. Now here we have observable, 1. That although Jerusalem was the nest of his enemies, the stage upon which his bloody sufferings were to be acted, the fatal place of his death, yet nothing terrified with danger, he sets his face for Jerusalem, that is, come what will, he will go with an invincible courage and resolution. Learn thence, That although Christ had a perfect and exact knowledge of all the bitter sufferings he was to undergo, for and on the behalf of his members, yet did it not in the least dishearten him in, or discourage him from, that great and glorious undertaking. Observe, 2. That though Christ was first to suffer before he did ascend, and to be lifted up upon the cross, before received up into heaven, yet is there no mention of his death here, but of his ascension only; as if all thoughts of death were swallowed up in his victory over death; teaching us, by his example, to overlook our sufferings and death, as not worthy to be named or mentioned with that glory which we are received into after death. The evangelist does not say the time was come when he should suffer, but when he should be received up.

52 And sent messengers before his face; and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

Our Saviour was now going from Galilee to Jerusalem, and being to pass through a village of Samaria, he sent messengers before him to prepare entertainment for him. The Son of God, who was heir of all things, sends to, and sues for a lodging in, a Samaritan cottage. O blessed Saviour, how can we be abased enough for thee,

who thus neglected thyself for us ! It was thy pleasure to appear, not in the figure of a prince, but in the form of a servant, yet the people in the Samaritan village would not receive him ! Strange ! to hear the Son of God sue for a lodging, and be denied ; but the reason was, the difference of religion which was between the Jews and Samaritans : the Jews worshipped at the temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritans at a temple of their own, built upon mount Gerizim. Upon the building of this new temple there arose so great a feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and in process of time such an implacable hatred, that they would not show a common civility to one another. A Samaritan's bread to a Jew, was no better than swine's flesh ; they would rather thirst than drink a draught of Samaritan water. Hence we learn, That no enmity is so desperate as that which arises from matters of religion.

54 And when his disciples, James and John, saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did ?

Here observe, 1. The crime which these men were guilty of : no affront must be accounted little, no indignity light, that is offered to the Son of God. But these Samaritans did not revile Christ, nor any of his retinue, that we read of ; they did not violently assault him, they did not follow him with stones in their hands, or blasphemies in their mouths, but the wrong and injury was only negative : *They received him not*. They denied him a night's lodging, and this not out of any dislike of his person, but from an antipathy against his nation. Observe, 2. The carriage of the disciples upon this occasion : it was thus far commendable, that from the endeared love which they bore to their Master, they did highly resent the churlish denial of an act of kindness towards him. A gracious heart is holily impatient at the sight of an indignity offered to Christ ; but their fault was, that they were too far transported with passion and revenge, even to desire the death and destruction of the uncivil Samaritans : *Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them ?* They do not say, Master, will it please thee, who art Lord of the creature, to command fire to come down ? Nor did they say, If it be

thy pleasure command us to call down fire ; but, *Wilt thou that we command fire ?* This savours too much of pride, cruelty, and revenge ; so dangerous is a misguided zeal.

55 But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

Here we have our Saviour's censure of the rash and hot motion of his disciples, which proceeded first from ignorance of themselves, *Ye know not of what spirit ye are of* ; ye are not now under the rough and sour dispensation of the law, but under the calm and gentle institution of the gospel, which designs universal love, peace, and good-will, to all mankind. Hence learn, First, That a cruel and revengeful spirit is directly contrary to the design and temper of christianity. Secondly, That no difference in religion, no pretence of zeal to God, can warrant and justify such a spirit and temper. Again, This rashness in the disciples proceeded from their ignorance of Christ their Lord and Master, as well as of themselves : *The Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them* ; that is, the proper intent and design of my coming was to save, and not destroy, though the accidental event of it may be otherwise, through the malice and perverseness of men. Learn, That it was the design of Christ and his holy religion to discountenance all fierceness, rage, and cruelty, in men, one towards another, and to inspire them universally with a spirit of love and unity. Christ is so far from allowing us to persecute them that hate us, that he forbids us to hate them that persecute us.

57 And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

Observe here, 1. A person resolving to follow Christ, a good resolution, if made deliberately and wisely, not for sinister ends, or secular advantages, which it is to be feared was the case here, by our Saviour's



answer; for, says he, *Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.* As if Christ had said, "My condition in the world is very poor, I have no house of residence that I call my own; the birds of the air have their fixed nests, and the beasts of the earth have their dens and holes, but I have no fixed habitation; therefore if you think to follow me for the sake of worldly advantage, you will find yourself greatly disappointed." Learn hence, That such men will find themselves miserably mistaken, and greatly disappointed, who expect to gain any thing by following of Christ, but their souls' salvation. It was a common opinion among the Jews, that the disciples of the Messiah should get wealth and honour by following him. 'Tis likely what this person said proceeded from this opinion; accordingly Christ discourages him from such expectation, by laying before him his mean, poor, and low condition, in which he was to be followed by his disciples; as if Christ had said, "If you expect temporal advantages by following of me, you will be much mistaken, for I have nothing I can call my own."

59 And he said unto another, Follow me, But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

We are not to suppose by this prohibition, that Christ disallows or disapproves of any civil office from one person to another, much less of a child to a parent, either living or dying; but he lets us know, 1. That no office of love and service to man must be preferred before our duty to God, to whom we owe our first and chief obedience. 2. That lawful and decent offices become sinful, when they hinder greater duties. 3. That such as are called by Christ to preach the gospel, must mind that alone, and leave inferior duties to inferior persons; as if Christ had said, "Others will serve well enough to bury the dead, but thou that art called to minister unto God, must do that unto which thou art called." Under the law the priests might not come near a dead corpse; nor meddle with the interment of

their own parents, unto which our Saviour here probably alludes.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Here we have another person that promiseth to follow Christ, but desireth leave first to settle the affairs of his family, and take leave of his friends. Our Saviour tells him, If he would be one of his ministers, he must be like a ploughman, who looks forward, and not backward, or he will never make his furrows right, they will either be too deep or too narrow, he must mind his plough and nothing else. Thus must they that are called to the work of the ministry, mind it wholly, attend to that alone; their whole time, their whole strength, must be devoted to it: the things of the world are things behind them, they must not look back upon them. Nothing can justify a minister concerning himself with the incumbrances of worldly business, but only perfect necessity for the support of himself and his family. Again, ploughing-work is hard work, a strong and steady hand is required for it; he that ploughs must keep on, and make no balks of the hardest ground he meets with: verily no difficulties must discourage either ministers or people in the way of their duty.

#### CHAP. X.

**A**FTER these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

The Captain general of our salvation, Christ Jesus, having called, commissioned, and sent forth his twelve apostles, as great commanders to subdue his native kingdom of Israel to himself, at the sixth chapter of this Gospel; in this chapter he sendeth after them a band of seventy auxiliary forces, to aid and assist them: *After these things the Lord appointed other seventy disciples, and sent them two and two before his face.* Where note, 1. The person commissioning and sending them forth: Christ himself. Thence learn, That none ought to take upon them the office of

preaching, or other ministerial functions in the church, till therunto called by Christ himself. The twelve apostles, and seventy disciples, had an immediate mission from Christ himself: all his ministers are now called mediately, and receive their authority from Christ by the hands of the governors of his church. Note, 2. The manner of their sending: two and two in a company, partly to make their message of more authority, partly to testify their mutual consent in the doctrine they taught, and partly to comfort and encourage, to help and strengthen, to assist and support, each other. In imitation of this example, the Jesuits sent forth their emissaries by pairs: *Jesuitæ semper sunt bini*, &c. Learn hence, That the ministers of the gospel do stand in great need of the mutual help and comfort, of the united assistance and encouragement, of each other, in the weighty duties of their calling and function. Our Saviour in the next verse compares his ministers to harvest labourers, who are to help and assist one another, the strong endeavouring to strengthen the hands of the weak. But, Lord! what tears are sufficient to bewail the want of love and unity, yea, the prevalency of that envy and malignity, which is found too often among the ministers of the gospel; so that instead of going forth two by two, happy is he that is alone in a place. Well might Melancthon bless God, when he lay a dying, that he was going to a place where he should be freed from the implacable hatred of divines; this is, and ought to be, for a lamentation.

2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

Note here, 1. That God's church is an harvest-field. 2. That the ministers of God are labourers in his harvest, under God the Lord of the harvest. 3. That to God alone it doth belong to send forth labourers into his harvest, and none must thrust themselves in, till God sends them forth: *Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers*. 4. That the number of faithful labourers is comparatively small and few: the scribes and Pharisees in the Jewish harvest-field are many; yet, says Christ, *The labourers are few*. 5. That it is the church's duty to pray,

and that earnestly and incessantly, to God the Lord of the harvest, to increase the number of faithful labourers; and to send forth more labourers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. 4 Carry neither purse nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

Our Saviour, 1. Arms his disciples against the difficulties, dangers, and discouragements which they might meet with in the course of their ministry, by telling them, that he sent them forth as lambs among wolves; thereby intimating, that the enemies of the gospel have as great an inclination, from their malicious nature, to devour and destroy the ministers of Christ, as wolves have from their natural temper to devour lambs: *Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves*. 2. Our Saviour directs them in this their first expedition to preach the gospel, to commit themselves to the gracious care and good providence of God, both for provision and protection: *Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor staff*, says St Matthew; as if he had said, Trust God with the care of your lives, rely upon his providence both for protection and provision: yet must we take notice, that this was only a temporary command, given to the disciples for this particular journey, which they were quickly to despatch; for in the general, Christ allows his ministers as well as others, to exercise a prudent and provident care for themselves and their families. And as it is the ministers' duty to trust God in the use of prudential means for their maintenance, so it is the people's duty to take care for their minister's comfortable subsistence. *The workman is worthy of his meat*, says our Saviour; that is, of all necessary supplies: he is worthy of a comfortable subsistence, and, where it may be had, of an honourable maintenance.

5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6 And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

Here our blessed Saviour directs his disciples how to manage themselves in the executing of their office: *Into whatsoever*

*house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house; they must wish peace to the sons of peace, yea, to the enemies of peace also; and as their peace shall rest upon the one, so shall it return from the other. Peace be to this house, is a fit salutation for them to use, who were the disciples and ambassadors of the Prince of peace; and very agreeable to the gospel they were to preach, which was a gospel of peace: and it was a prayer as well as a salutation; the disciples were to speak it not from the lip only, but from the heart also. Peace is the music which both men and angels are delighted with, and the christian religion is the greatest promoter and preserver of it, that commands us to pray for peace, to follow after peace, to part with our coat and cloak, that is, with our civil rights, for peace; and, if it be possible, to live peaceably with all men. Observe, 2. As the injunction given by our Saviour to his disciples to deliver a message of peace, first say, *Peace be to this house*; so the prediction of what should befall them in the delivery of this their message. Their salutation, though it be peace, yet will not find a welcome and entertainment with all persons, but only with the sons of peace: *If the sons of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it*. Observe, 3. An encouragement not to be afraid of delivering their message though it wanted success: *If your peace rest not, it shall return to you again*. Learn, 1. That as there was at the first preaching of the gospel, so there is, and always will be, some that are sons of peace, and others that are enemies unto peace. 2. That this peace will rest on none but those that are fit to receive it. 3. That though it doth not rest, yet it shall not be lost, but return again to those that publish it. Ministers can but say, *Peace be to this house*, they cannot make it rest there; we can offer terms of peace to a lost world, but cannot compel men to accept them; and if they finally refuse them, *we shall be a sweet savour unto God, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved*.*

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. 8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: 9 And heal the sick

that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 12 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

Here our Saviour gives his disciples sundry directions, how to manage themselves in this expedition for preaching the gospel. He enjoins them, 1. To observe the rules of decency in going from place to place; having entered an house to continue there, not changing their lodging, and going from house to house, thereby avoiding all show of lightness and inconstancy, and testifying all gravity and staydness in their behaviour; this being a special mean to win authority to their persons and ministry. 2. He gives them a power to work miracles for the confirming of the doctrine which they preached: *Heal the sick that are therein*. This was necessary, partly to procure reverence to their persons, being poor and unlearned men; and partly to gain credit and authority to their doctrine: for the doctrine of faith in the Messias, as now come and exhibited in the flesh, being a strange and new doctrine to the Jews, the truth and certainty of it was to be extraordinarily ratified and confirmed by working miracles; one sort of which was healing of diseases in an extraordinary manner. Observe, 3. How Christ encourages his disciples against the want of success: he bids them denounce the judgments of God against such contemners of their doctrine, by *shaking off the dust of their feet*; which action was emblematical, and signified that God in like manner would shake off them, and esteem them no better than the vilest dust. Learn hence, That those which despise the message that the ministers of the gospel bring, shall hereafter find the dust of their feet, and the ashes of their graves, to give a judicial testimony against them in the day of Christ. Wherever the word is preached, it is for a testimony, either a testimony for, or against a

people. For, if the dust of a minister's feet bear witness against a people, their sermons much more. Observe, lastly, The dreadful judgment denounced by our Saviour against the contemners of his disciples' doctrine: *Verily it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.* Where note, 1. That there shall be a day of judgment. 2. That in the day of judgment some sinners shall fare worse than others. 3. That of all sinners, the condition of such shall be saddest at the day of judgment, who, living under the gospel, die after all in their impenitency and infidelity: *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city.*

13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

These cities in Galilee, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, having been the place where Christ preached and wrought his miracles, they have a woe denounced here against them for their contempt of Christ, and the offers of his grace: *Woe unto thee, Chorazin, &c.* The higher a people rise under the means, the lower they fall if they miscarry. They that have been nearest to conversion, being not converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged. Capernaum's sentence will exceed Sodom's for severity, because she excelled Sodom in the enjoyment of means and mercy. Observe here, 1. Capernaum's privilege enjoyed; *She was lifted up to heaven;* that is, enjoyed privileges above all other places, namely, the presence, preaching, and miracles of our Saviour. Observe, 2. Capernaum's doom denounced: *Thou shalt be thrust down to hell;* that is, thy condition shall be sadder than those that never heard of a Saviour; even Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, those rude and barbarous nations, out of the pale of the church, shall be in an easier state and condition, than those that have enjoyed gospel-ordinances

and church-privileges, but not improved them. Learn hence, 1. That gospel-ordinances enjoyed, are a mighty honour and advancement to the poorest persons and obscurest places: *Thou, Capernaum, art exalted to heaven.* 2. That gospel-ordinances and church-privileges enjoyed, but not improved, provoke Almighty God to inflict the sorest judgments upon a people: *Thou that art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.*

16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

Here our Saviour encourages his ministers to faithfulness in their office, by assuring them that he should reckon and esteem all the kindness shown to them, as done unto himself: *He that receiveth you, receiveth me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* Where note, That all the offices of love and respect, of kindness and charity, which we show to the ministers and members of Christ for his sake, Christ reckons it done unto himself. Note farther, That the contempt of the message and messengers of the gospel runs much higher than men are aware of. They think it no great matter to slight or neglect the messengers of Christ; but verily that contempt flies in the face and authority of Christ himself, who gave them their commission; yea, in the very face of God the Father, who gave Christ his commission: and accordingly they are called God's mouth, *Jer. xv. 19.* their message and their mission being both from him. Nay, farther, this sin strikes at our own souls, and we are injurious to them as well as unto Christ; *he that despiseth you, despiseth me;* yet certainly no age was ever deeper drenched in the guilt of this sin than the present age is.

17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Observe here, 1. The seventy disciples return to give Christ an account of the success of their expedition. They return as victors with joy and triumph, showing Christ the trophies of their conquest: *Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through*

*thy name*; the weapons of their warfare were not carnal but spiritual, and mighty through Christ; the powers of darkness cannot stand, but must fall before the power of Christ; the devils are no match for Christ, no, not for the meanest of the ministers of Christ, who go forth in his name, armed with his authority and power. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's reply to the seventy disciples upon this occasion: *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*; a two-fold interpretation is given of these words; 1. Some look upon them as a secret rebuke given by our Saviour to the seventy for that excess of joy, and mixture of vain-glory, which was found with them, upon the account of those extraordinary gifts and abilities of casting out devils, and healing diseases, which were conferred upon them. *I beheld Satan*, says Christ, *falling like lightning from heaven*; as if Christ had said, "Take heed of being puffed up with pride, upon the account of those endowments which I have bestowed upon you: remember Lucifer the prince of pride, how he fell from heaven by his arrogancy, and labour you to ascend thither by humility." The words in this sense afford this instruction; That those whom Christ has bestowed the greatest measure of spiritual graces, ministerial gifts, and temporal blessings upon, ought to be very watchful against that hateful sin of pride, which has ruined and destroyed so many thousands of angels and men. 2. Some understand this fall of Satan not literally, but figuratively and mystically, of his ruin by the power and preaching of the gospel; as if Christ had said, I know that this is no vain boast of yours, no vaunt nor brag of your value, that devils are conquered by your courage; for when I first sent you forth to preach the gospel, and armed you with divine power, I easily foresaw that the devil's kingdom would shake about his ears, and that his power would be ruined by the power of the gospel, and that wherever you preached, Satan's strength and power would vanish like a flash of lightning, suddenly and irrecoverably. Learn hence, That the powerful and efficacious preaching of the gospel is the special means ordained and appointed by Christ for the ruin and subversion of Satan's kingdom in the world: as the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe and obey it; so it is the power of God unto destruction to Satan, and all that fight under his banner against it.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Our Lord finding that his seventy ambassadors had managed their former commission so well, he here enlarged it, adding thereunto a promise of divine protection: *Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents, and nothing shall hurt you*: as if Christ had said, Go forth again in this armour of power, with which I have girt you, and I warrant you sword-free and shot-free; nothing shall by any means hurt you, neither strength nor stratagem shall overcome you. Neither the power, the presence, nor protection, of God, shall be wanting to any of Christ's ministers or members, who go forth in his strength against the spiritual enemies of his salvation. As we have a promise of power in this text to enable us to resist the devil, so we have a promise of success elsewhere upon our resisting him: *Resist the devil and he will fly from you*, St. James iv. 7.

20 Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

In these words of our Saviour there is something corrective, and something directive? the corrective part lies in the first words, wherein Christ checks the suspected excesses of their joy for victories gained over evil spirits: *In this rejoice not*: that is, let not your hearts too much overflow with joy upon this occasion. The negative is not absolute, but comparative only. Christ doth not forbid, but only qualify and moderate their joy: *That the spirits are subject to you*, that is, the devils. Where note, 1. That though the evil angels by their fall have lost their happy condition, yet not their original constitution; their honour, but not their nature: they are spirits still. 2. The subjection of those evil spirits to the power of Christ, is not a free and professed, but an involuntary and imposed subjection, like that of a slave to his lord, whether he will or no. Learn hence, 1. That evil spirits are subject to the power of Christ! not only to his personal, but to his ministerial power. 2. That it is matter of great joy to see evil spirits brought into sub-

jection by the power of Christ. To seethe evil spirit of pride and contention, of envy and malice, of error and falsehood, of jealousy and self-love, of animosity and division, not only chained but changed; to see not only an unwilling subjection, but a subjection of the will given to Christ; is matter of great joy and unspeakable rejoicing. The directive part of our Saviour's words lies in the latter part of the verse: *but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.* There are no literal records in the court of heaven, no pen or ink, paper or parchment; but *to be written in heaven*, is to have a title to eternal life, and to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Learn, 1. That God has in heaven a book of life; a book written with the golden rays and beams of his own eternal love. Observe, 2. That there are names written in this book. 3. That persons may know that their names are written in that book, otherwise they could not rejoice, for no man can rejoice in an unknown good. 4. That it is greater matter of joy and rejoicing to know that our names are written in heaven, than to have a power to cast out devils here on earth. A man may have power to cast forth devils out of others, and yet at the same time the devil may have power in and over himself: *Therefore in this rejoice not, that the devils are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.* If you say, With what spectacles shall we read that at such a distance? Who will ascend up into heaven to see whether his name be written there? or who can send a messenger thither to search the records? I answer, Turn thine eyes inward: if the name of God be written in thy heart, thy name is certainly written in heaven; if you in your daily actions write out a copy of God's book (the blessed Bible) here below, assure yourselves the hand of God has written your names in his book above; that is, you shall certainly be saved.

21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man know-

eth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

Here we find our Saviour glorifying his Father, and magnifying himself. 1. He glorifies his Father for the wise and free dispensation of his gospel-grace to the meanest and most ignorant persons, whilst the great and learned men of the world undervalued and despised it: *I thank thee, Father, that thou hast revealed these things to babes.* Learn hence, 1. That till God reveals himself, his nature and will, no man can know either what he is, or what he requires: *Thou hast revealed.* 2. That the wise and knowing men in the world have in all ages despised the mysteries of the gospel, and having therefore been judiciously blinded by God: *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.* When men shut their eyes against the clearest light, and say, they will not see, God closes their eyes, and says, they shall not see. 3. That the most ignorant, if humble, and desirous of spiritual illumination, are in the readiest disposition to receive and embrace the gospel revelation: *Thou hast revealed them unto babes.* 4. That this is not more pleasing to Christ than it is the pleasure of his Father: *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* Observe, 2. Our Saviour magnifies himself, 1. His authority and commission: *All things are delivered unto me*; that is, all power is committed to me as mediator from God the Father. 2. His office to reveal his Father's will to a lost world: *No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, or the Son but the Father*; that is, no man knoweth their essence and nature, their will and pleasure, their counsel and consent, their mutual compact and agreement betwixt themselves, for saving a lost world, but only themselves, and those to whom they have revealed it. Learn thence, That all saving knowledge of God is in, by, and through Christ; he, as the great prophet of his church, reveals unto us the mind and will of God for our salvation: *None knoweth but he to whom the Son revealeth.*

23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: 24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye

see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

From the very first giving out of the promise of Christ to Adam after the fall, *Gen. iii. 15.* there was in all good men a longing desire and expectation to see that person who should be so great a blessing to mankind. Prophets and kings desired to see the promised Messiah. Now, says our Saviour to his disciples, *Blessed are you, for you have seen* with the eyes of your body what others only saw with the eyes of their mind; with your bodily eyes you have seen the promised Messiah coming in the flesh, and also the miracles to confirm you that I am he, have been wrought before your eyes; therefore blessed are the eyes of your body, which have beheld me corporally; and blessed also are the eyes of your mind, which have beheld me spiritually. A sight of Christ by a believing eye, much more by a glorified eye, is a blessed sight. Blessed are those eyes which see Christ in his dispensations of glory hereafter.

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Here we have a lawyer, that is, an interpreter and expounder of the law of Moses, tempting our Saviour; that is, making a trial of him, whether he would deliver any doctrine contrary to the law of Moses; he propounds therefore a question, *What he should do to inherit eternal life?* Where note, he believed the certainty of a future state. 2. He professes his desire of an eternal happiness in that state. 3. He declares his readiness to do something in order to the obtaining of that happiness. Hence learn, That all religion, both natural and revealed, teaches men that good works are necessary to salvation, or that something

must be done by them who desire to enter into life: *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* It is not talking well, and professing well, but doing well, that entitles us to heaven and eternal salvation; and this the very light of nature teaches. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's answer: *What is written in the law? how readest thou?* Intimating to us, that the word and law of God is the rule and measure of our duty; our guide to direct us in the way to eternal life. The man replies, That the law of God requires that we love God with all our heart, soul, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. Where note, 1. That the fervour of all our affections, and particularly the supremacy of our love, is required by God as his right and due. Love must pass through and possess all the powers and faculties of our souls. The mind must meditate upon God, the will must choose and embrace him, the affections must take complacency and delight in him, the measure of loving God is to love him without measure. Note, 2. That the best evidence of our sincere love to God is, the unfeigned love of our neighbour: love to man is both a fruit and testimony of our love to God. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? Note, 3. That as it is every man's duty to love himself, so is he to love his neighbour as himself; not as he does love himself, but as he ought to love himself; not with the same measure and degree of love, but in the same manner and kind of love that we love ourselves. Do we love ourselves freely and readily, sincerely and unfeignedly, tenderly and compassionately, constantly and perseveringly? so should we love our neighbour also. Though we are not required to love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves, yet are we commanded to love him like as we love ourselves. Observe lastly, Our Lord's reply: *Thou hast answered right. This do, and thou shalt live.* Where note, That Christ intimates to him, that the law considered in itself could give life, but then a person must keep it perfectly and exactly, without the least deficiency; which is impossible to man in his fallen state; for the law is not weak to us, but we are weak to that, *Rom. viii. 3.* the law becomes weak through the weakness of our flesh. Such as seek salvation by the works of the law, must keep the law perfectly and exactly; which being impossible in our fallen estate, Christ has obtained of his

Father, that for his sake our sincere, though imperfect obedience, shall find acceptance with God and be available to our salvation.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30 And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on *him*, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on *him*. 34 And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. 36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

The design of our Saviour in this parable is to convince the lawyer, who put that question to him, *Who is my neighbour?* v. 29. that every one is, and ought to be, accounted our neighbour, to whom God affords us an opportunity of doing good; contrary to the strait notion of the Pharisees, that by the word *neighbour*, understood friends and kinsfolk, brethren by blood, neighbours by habitation, and persons of the same religion. Our Saviour by this parable taught him, that even strangers and professed enemies, every one that needed our help and relief, is to be accounted our neighbour. To convince him

hereof, Christ propounds this parable of a Jew that fell among thieves, who was neglected by his own countrymen, but relieved by a Samaritan, who, though a professed enemy upon the score of religion, yet was so exceeding kind and charitable, that he became physician, surgeon, and host, and a real neighbour to the unknown traveller wounded by thieves in his journey to Jericho. From the whole learn, 1. That every person in misery is the object of our mercy, our neighbour, and capable of our charity. 2. That no difference in religion, much less in some doubtful opinion, will excuse us from exercising acts of charity and compassion towards such as are really in want, and need our assistance. Our holy and merciful religion makes all persons the object of our compassion, who are indigent and helpless; though they be strangers and foreigners, heathens or heretics, friends or enemies; yea, be they good or bad, holy or wicked, as we have opportunity we must do good unto all; and imitate the example of our merciful God, who is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. 3. That real charity is an active operative thing; it consists not in good words given to the distressed, nor in compassionate beholding of them, nor in a pitiful mourning over them, but in positive acts of kindness towards them. The Samaritan here is an example of a real and thorough charity; he turns his face towards the forlorn man, his feet hasten to him, his hand pours in wine and oil into his wounds, after which he set him upon his own beast, brings him to the inn, stays with him all night; and the next day, because his recovery would be a work of time and expence, he leaves him, but first leaves money with the host, and a special charge to take care of him; with a punctual promise that whatever was expended more should be repaid. Behold here an instance and pattern of a complete charity, managed with as much discretion as compassion: well might our Lord say to this person, and in him to every one of us, *Go, and do thou likewise.*

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

Observe here, 1. The great work and business of our Saviour's life: it was to go



about preaching the gospel. 2. The nature of the place which Christ at this time preached in : it was a poor village ; Bethany, as some think. Christ did not only take care of populous cities, and great towns, but private villages and obscure places enjoyed also the blessing of his ministry. Our Saviour's example herein is instructive to his ministers, not to affect great auditories, and to preach only in populous cities, but to scatter the seed of the word in country villages, where are like precious souls to be taken care of, and provided for ; as Christ was sent himself, so he sends his ministers to preach the gospel to the poor. Observe, 3. The party that entertained him in the village : *Martha received him into her house.* Martha is named, because she was probably the owner of the house. Though Christ had no house of his own, yet he had as many as he pleased at his command ; for wherever he had an heart, he was sure to have an house : *Martha received him into her house.*

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

Observe, 1. Both these sisters were holy and devout women, both had an honour and reverence for Christ, and both are forward to entertain him ; these were sisters by grace as well as by nature ; yea they both for a time attended upon Christ's preaching. Mary (also) sat at Jesus' feet, implying, that Martha sat there too, till household occasions called her away. O how happy is that family, where all parties are agreed to receive and entertain the Lord Jesus Christ ! Observe, 2. No sooner is Christ entered into Martha's house, but he falls a preaching ; whilst they provide bodily food for him, he prepares spiritual bread for them. O that in our place and measure we might all imitate Christ in this : can we come into any house or company, and find nothing to say or do for God ? Observe, 3. The holy and humble deportment of Mary upon this occasion : *She sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his words.* When Christ was speaking, Mary was hearing, and little things could not take her off. Lord ! how carefully should we take the present opportunity for our souls, to hear and learn of thee, as Mary did. She was not sure of another opportunity, therefore hears humbly, attentively, and affectionately, as if it were her last hearing season.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone ? bid her therefore that she help me.

Observe here, 1. Martha's behaviour : *She was cumbered about much serving ;* that is, much taken up with providing for the entertainment of Christ and his friends ; all which considered in itself was no mis-carriage, but a token of Martha's endeared respect to her best Friend. A person that sincerely loves Christ, as Martha did, thinks he can never show enough of respect unto him. Martha having such a guest to honour her house, puts forth herself all she can, yea, more than she was able, to give him entertainment : *She was cumbered about much serving.* Observe, 2. Martha's complaint to Christ concerning her sister's not joining with her in the work that lay so hard upon her : *Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone ? bid her therefore that she help me :* as if Martha had said, Is it a fit thing that both thyself, and all this company, should be unprovided for ? or is it reasonable that the whole burden should lie upon me, whilst Mary sits still, and does not touch the least household business with one of her fingers ? Lord, what infirmity and weakness intermixes and mingles with the virtues and graces of the best of thy servants, especially when they give way to their distempered passions ! This good woman at this time did not attend upon Christ's preaching herself, but interrupts him with a frivolous complaint about her sister : *Bid her that she help me.* But why did not Martha speak to her sister herself, and whisper in her ear, and acquaint her how she wanted her help, but makes her moan to Christ ? *Ans.* 'Tis like she thought her sister was so tied by the ear with those adamant chains of Christ's heavenly doctrine, that until Christ was silent she had no power to stir ; doubtless she believed that Mary would not move unless Christ spake to her so to do. Observe, 3. That all this while Mary speaks not one word for herself : no doubt it troubled her, good woman, to hear her sister complain of her to Christ, and find herself blamed for her piety, and implicitly condemned for laying hold upon such a sweet opportunity of hearing the beloved of her soul, whose lips dropt as the honey-comb ;

however, she speaks not a word in her own vindication, but leaves her answer to her Saviour. Learn thence, That when we are complained of for well-doing, it is our duty, and may it be our prudence, to seal up our lips in silence, and to expect our vindication from above. Mary says nothing, but Christ speaks for her in the next verses.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

As if Christ had said, Martha, Martha, I well know that thou doest all this in love to me, and it is no more than what is thy duty in its proper season; but thou hadst now an opportunity to hear my word, which thou canst not have every day, and it would have pleased me better, to whom it is meat and drink to feed souls, if I had seen thee sitting with thy dear sister at my feet, and yielding an attentive regard to my holy doctrine, than to find thee performing a necessary civility to my person. Thou hast not made a bad choice, but Mary has made a better; she has laid all aside to attend upon my ministry, and the fruit of it will continue with her to all eternity: *It is that good part which shall never be taken away from her.* Note here, 1. The unexpectedness of our Saviour's answer to Martha, how contrary it was to her expectation: she thought that her sister should have been sent away with a check, and herself with thanks, but she is quite mistaken: for all her good cheer that she had provided for Christ, he spares not to tell her of her fault: *Martha, Martha, thou art troubled about many things.* Learn hence, That no obligations to any particular persons should so enthrall us, but that our tongues should be at liberty to reprove the faults of our best friends, wherever we find them. Martha, though a pious and good woman, though a friendly and kind woman, though a woman greatly beloved by Christ, yet is she reprov'd by Christ. Note, 2. The reproof given to Martha: *Thou art troubled about many things;* where Christ condemns not her hospitality, but her solicitude and superfluity, her distraction and perplexity. O how prone are we to exceed in things lawful and necessary, and to go beyond our bounds

in them: when we are satisfied in the matter, we are prone to exceed in the measure. Martha's entertainment of Christ was a noble service, but she was too anxious and solicitous about it; she was *cumbered*, she was *careful*, she was *troubled*. Note, 3. Our Saviour's admonition: *But one thing is needful:* that is, there is one thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us, and is of the greatest concernment to us; namely, the business of religion, and the care of our souls' salvation. Learn hence, That the care of religion, and our souls' salvation, is the *one thing* necessary, and that which every man is concerned in the first place, and above all other things, to regard and mind. Note, 4. Our Saviour's justification of Mary's choice: *Mary hath chosen that good part; "Non tu malam, sed illa meliorem."* Christ did not tell Martha she had chosen a bad part, but her sister had chosen the better. Martha's entertainment of Christ was good, but Mary's attendance upon Christ's ministry was better, and more pleasing unto Christ. Christ was better pleased to see Mary in the chapel, than Martha in the kitchen; though he doth not condemn the one, yet he extols the other; Mary had chosen the good part. Learn hence, That religion and the service of God must be the matter of our election and choice; we must choose the good part, and it being once chosen by us, it shall never be taken away from us: *One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall never be taken away from her.*

## CHAP. XI.

AND it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

The learned Mr. Mead upon this place apprehends, that it was the custom of the Jewish doctors to deliver some certain form of prayer to their disciples to use, at least that John Baptist had done so to his disciples; thereupon our Saviour's disciples besought him, that he also would give them in like manner some form of his own composing, that they might pray with their Master's spirit, as John's disciples did with his. Accordingly our Saviour gives them

here a form of his own, and commands them when they pray to use it. Indeed he had given them this prayer about a year and a half before, in his sermon upon the mount, Matt. vi. 9. *After this manner pray ye* : where it is probable that the disciples looked upon it only as a pattern of prayer, and not as a form ; for had they thought that Christ had given them a form of prayer before, they had not asked him for one now : therefore, says Christ, *When ye pray, say*. Certainly this gives us to understand that our Saviour intended and commanded it for a set form of prayer unto his church. Learn hence, That the Lord's prayer is both a pattern and platform according to which all our prayers ought to be framed ; and also an exact form of prayer, which ought to be used by us in our addresses to the throne of grace : *After this manner pray ye*, says St. Matthew ; *When ye pray, say*, says St. Luke.

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say,

Observe here, the favour which Christ does us in prescribing a form of prayer to us ; a great favour no doubt, though the world grows weary of it : we know not, alas ! what to ask, but he himself teaches us, and frames our supplication for us, that it may be accepted. Should a king's son draw a petition for a poor subject, to be put up to his father, what a ground of hope would there be, that whatever is desired would be obtained ! if any of us then think meanly of our Lord's prayer, O how meanly may he think of us, and of our prayers !

—Our Father which art in heaven : Hallowed be thy name : Thy kingdom come : Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread : 4 And forgive us our sins ; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us : And lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil.

The sense and signification of this best of prayers is this : ' O thou our Father in Jesus Christ ! who remainest in thy throne in heaven, and art there perpetually praised and perfectly obeyed by glorious angels and glorified saints ; grant that thy name may be glorified, thy throne acknowledged, and thy holy will obeyed here on earth below by us thy sons and

servants, as readily, as cheerfully, and sincerely, and in some degree of proportion to what is done in heaven above. And because, by reason of the frailty of our natures, we cannot subsist without the comforts and supports of life, we crave our daily bread at thy bountiful hand ; even such a proportion of the good things of this life as thy wisdom shall be convenient for us. And knowing that thy holiness and justice doth oblige thee to punish sin and sinners, we plead with thee, for the sake of thy Son's satisfaction, to forgive us our daily trespasses ; for it is our desire and endeavour, heartily to forgive those that have offended us. And seeing this wicked world wherein we live is so full of snares and temptations of all sorts, we pray that by the power of thy grace, and the concurrence of our own careful endeavours, we may be kept from Satan's temptations, from the world's allurements, and from our own evil inclinations ; and be preserved unblamable to thine everlasting kingdom : and in testimony of our desires and assurance to be heard, we say, *Amen*, so be it, so let it be ; even so, O Lord, let it be for ever.' Learn, 1. That God is the Father of all his people : as a Father he knows all his children, he loves them and takes care of them : as his children, it is our duty to honour him, to obey him, to imitate him, to cast our care upon him, and to long for the enjoyment of him. 2. From the word *our*, learn, That it is our duty to pray for others, as well as for ourselves ; we cannot pray acceptably for ourselves, if we pray only for ourselves. 3. That the hallowing, honouring, and sanctifying of God's name, as it is the first thing we are to pray for, so it ought to be preferred before all other things whatsoever : we pray for it before we pray for our own salvation ; we say, *Hallowed be thy name*, before we say, *Forgive us our debts*. 4. Learn, That sins are debts, and sinners are indebted to divine justice. Sin is an infinite debt, a multiplied debt, an inexcusable debt, and if not discharged by our surety, we must lie in prison to all eternity, for non-payment of this debt. 5. That God has made our forgiveness of others the condition of his forgiving us : the word *as*, is not a note of equality, but of similitude ; we cannot equal God in forgiving, but we must imitate him. 6. No sooner is sin pardoned, but Satan will be busy with his temptation : *Forgive us our sins, and lead us not into temptation*.

7. That it is a greater mercy to be delivered from the evil of temptation, than from temptations to evil. The evil of temptations is the evil of sin, but temptation to evil is at most but the evil of punishment. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*; suffer us not to be led into temptation, or, if so, leave us not when we are tempted.

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

The design of our blessed Saviour in these, and the following verses, is to excite and stir up his disciples to fervency, importunity, and constancy, in the duty of prayer, and to this purpose he makes use of a double argument, the one of a friend, and the other of a father. 1. He lays before them the parable of a friend, coming to his friend at midnight, and by his importunity obtaining that of him which otherwise he must have gone without. From whence our Lord leaves us to infer, that if an impudent and bold beggar can obtain so much from a man, what cannot an humble, earnest, and daily petitioner obtain from God? What friend so faithful and helpful to his dearest friend, as God is to us his children? From the whole note, 1. That a man must be brought into a state of friendship and reconciliation with God, if he hopes his prayers shall be accepted. 2. That when any of the friends of God are in necessities and straits, he allows them the liberty at all hours to call upon him, and pray unto him: at midnight as well as at mid-day, God's ear is open to his praying friends. 3. That Almighty God takes pleasure in being urged in prayer by the holy importunity of his friends: never is he better pleased, than when his people, with holy Jacob, *wrestle with him, and will*

*not let him go till he hath blessed them.*

4. That such holy and humble importunity shall not only obtain what we desired, but more than we expected: only three loaves were desired here, but because of importunity he had as many as he needed; more is given in the concession, than was desired in the supplication. The original word here rendered *importunity*, signifies *impudence*, according to that saying among the Jews, The impudent man overcomes the modest and the bashful; how much more God, who is goodness itself?

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Our Saviour here goes on to urge us to importunity and constancy in prayer; he bids us *ask, seek, and knock*, and assures us we shall be accepted, heard, and answered. Here note, 1. That man is a poor indigent creature, full of wants, but unable to supply them. 2. As man is an indigent and insufficient creature, so God is an all-sufficient good, able to supply the wants, and to relieve the necessities, of his creatures. 3. That Almighty God stands ready to supply all our wants, not temporal only, but spiritual also, affording his grace, and the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to them that ask it. 4. If therefore we want the grace of God, and the assistance of his Holy Spirit, it is our own fault, and not God's; it is either for want of seeking, or for want of earnestness in asking; for our Saviour expressly assures us, that God denies it to none; *but every one that asketh receiveth.*

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

The second parable which our Saviour makes use of, is that of a father to his chil-

dren ; Christ represents the care and kindness of God towards us by the affections which earthly parents bear to their natural children, who though they be many times evil themselves, yet are not wont to deny their children necessary good things, when they dutifully and decently beg them at their hands : *If ye being evil—how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit ;* that is, the continual presence and influence of his Holy Spirit to all the purposes of guidance and direction, of grace and assistance, of comfort and support, in our christian course. Learn hence, That the presence and assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to enable us to do what God requires, shall never be wanting to those that desire it, and endeavour after it. But we must always remember that the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, though it be offered and tendered to us, yet it is not forced upon us ; for if we beg the Holy Spirit and his assistance, but refuse to make use of it ; or if we cry to him for his help to mortify our lusts, but do not put forth our own endeavours ; we forfeit the divine assistance, and God will certainly withdraw his Holy Spirit from us.

14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake ; and the people wondered. 15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. 16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. 17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation : and a house divided against a house, falleth. 18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. 19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out ? therefore shall they be your judges. 20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

A relation is here given of a famous miracle wrought by our Saviour in casting

a devil out of a possessed man. It is called a dumb devil, because of the effect upon the poor possessed person in restraining the use of his tongue. Learn here, 1. That among the many calamities which sin has rendered human nature liable and obnoxious to, this is one, to be bodily possessed by Satan. 2. That one demonstration of Christ's divine power, and a convictive evidence of his being truly and really God, was his casting out devils by the word of his power. Observe, 3. What a sad and contrary effect this miracle had upon the wicked Pharisees, through their own blindness, obstinacy, and malice : instead of magnifying his divine power, they maliciously accuse him for holding a correspondence with the devil, and acting by a power derived from him ; as if Satan should lend our Saviour a power against himself, and that for the destruction of his own kingdom. Lord ! how dangerous is a wilful opposition against the truth ! It provokes the Almighty to deliver persons up to the most unreasonable infidelity, and obstinate obduracy. Observe, 4. Our Saviour knowing their thoughts, makes a just apology for himself, by showing how improbable and unlikely, how unreasonable and absurd, it is once to imagine or suppose that Satan should cast out himself, and any ways seek to oppose or destroy his own kingdom : Now, if I have received (says Christ) my power from Satan, for casting out of Satan, then is the devil like a family divided within itself, and divided like a kingdom against itself, which can never stand, but must be brought to destruction. Observe, lastly, Our Saviour tells the Pharisees, that they might with as much reason attribute all other miracles to the power of the devil, as those wrought by himself ; for there were certain Jews among them that cast out devils in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; now our Saviour asks them by what power these their children cast them out ? They acknowledged that what they did was by the power of God, and there was no cause but their malice, why they should not acknowledge that what he did was by the same power ; *If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out ? But if I with the finger of God cast them out, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you ;* that is, the long expected kingdom of the Messiah is certainly come, and I having wrought these miracles by my own power, is a demonstrative proof that I am the promised Messiah.

21 When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: 22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. 23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth. 24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. 25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. 26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Our Saviour having sufficiently shown that he did not work his miracles by the power of the devil, he next informs the Pharisees from whence he had that power, even from God himself; accordingly he compares Satan to a strong man armed with weapons to defend his house; and himself clothed with divine power, he compares to one that is stronger than the strong man. So that the argument runs thus: the devil is very strong and powerful, and there is no power but only God's that is stronger than his: if, then, says Christ, I were not assisted with a divine power, I could never cast out this strong man, who reigns in the bodies and souls of men, as in his house; for it must be a stronger than the strong man that shall bind Satan; and who is he but the God of strength? Learn thence, That only Christ's divine power is superior to Satan's strength: he only can vanquish and overrule him at his pleasure, and drive him out of that possession, which he holds either in the bodies or souls of men: *The strong man armed keeps the house, till a stronger than he comes upon him, and overcomes him. When the unclean spirit goeth out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.* Note here, 1. That Satan is an unclean spirit, he hath lost his original purity, his holy nature in which he was created, and is by sin become universally sinful and impure; no means being allowed by God, for the purg-

ing of his filthy and impure nature; yea, he is a perfect enemy to purity and holiness; maligning all that love it, and would promote it. 2. That Satan is a restless and unquiet spirit; being cast out of heaven, he can rest no where: when he is either gone out of a man by policy, or cast out by power, he has no content or satisfaction, till he returns into a filthy heart, where he delights to be, as the swine in miry places. 3. That wicked and profane sinners have this unclean spirit dwelling in them: their hearts are Satan's house and habitation, and the lusts of pride and unbelief, malice and revenge, envy and hypocrisy, these are the garnishings and furniture of Satan's house. Man's heart was God's house by creation, 'tis now Satan's by usurpation and judiciary tradition. 4. That Satan, by the preaching of the gospel, may seem to go out of persons, and they become sober and civilized; yet may he return again to his old habitation, and the latter end of that man be worse than the beginning.

27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28 But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Observe here, 1. How ready we are to admire persons for their external privileges, and the favours of divine Providence, and to pronounce such blessed: *Blessed is the womb that bare thee.* 2. That Christ makes another judgment of persons, and pronounces them more blessed, that bear him in their hearts by faith, than his own mother, who bare him in her womb by sense. The blessedness of being an obedient believer, is far greater than that of being the mother of our blessed Saviour. Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is not denied unto us now. Although we cannot see Christ, yet love him we may; his bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual gracious presence is not denied us. Though Christ be not ours in house, in arms, by affinity, by consanguinity; yet in heart, in faith, in love, in service, he is or may be ours: verily spiritual regeneration, and an obediential doing of God's

will, bringeth men into a more honourable relation to Christ, than natural generation ever did : *Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation : they seek a sign ; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them : for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : for they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

The sign which the Pharisees here desired of our Saviour, was a miracle wrought by him. Now our Saviour, though he was very ready to work miracles to encourage and confirm his hearers' faith, yet not to satisfy the unbelieving Pharisees' curiosity : and accordingly he tells them, they should have no other sign than that of his resurrection, which Jonas was a type of. Next he threatens them for their obstinacy and infidelity, which he aggravates from the example of the queen of the south, and the men of Nineveh. From thence learn, That the sins of infidelity and impenitency are exceedingly heightened, and their guilt aggravated, from the means afforded by God to bring men to faith and obedience. The sin of the Pharisees was infinitely greater in rejecting the evidence of Christ's miracles, than the sin of the Ninevites would have been in refusing to hearken to Jonas's ministry ; therefore the Ninevites shall condemn the Pharisees.

33 No man when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. 34 The light of the body is the eye : there-

fore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light ; but when *thine eye* is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Our Saviour in these words does these two things : 1. He declares, that although his ministry had no effect upon the proud and obstinate Pharisees, yet he would not hide the light which he came into the world to bring, nor conceal that heavenly doctrine which his Father had committed to him to communicate to the children of men ; teaching us, That such as are enlightened by God with the knowledge of his word and will, ought not to conceal and hide this knowledge within themselves, but communicate it to others, and improve it for the good and benefit of others : *No man that lighteth a candle putteth it under a bushel.* 2. Our Saviour here discovers the reason why the Pharisees continued blind under so clear a light as that of his ministry ; namely, because the eye of their understanding was darkened, not so much with ignorance as with prejudice, whereby they opposed Christ and his holy doctrine : for if the mind be clearly enlightened by the word and Spirit of God, that light will diffuse and spread itself in the soul, as the bright shining of a candle doth in the house, enlightening all the inward faculties, and directing all the outward actions, and communicating its light also to the enlightening of others.

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him : and he went in, and sat down to meat. 38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter : but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. 40 Ye fools ! did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also ?

Observe here, 1. The free conversation of our blessed Saviour, how readily he complies with the Pharisees' invitation to dine with him. I do not find that, when Christ was invited to any table, that ever he refused to go; if a Pharisee, if a publican invited him, he constantly went, not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good. Christ feasts us when we feed him: he says of himself, that he came eating and drinking, that is, allowing himself a free, though innocent, conversation with all sorts of persons, that he might gain some. Observe, 2. The exception which the Pharisee takes at our Saviour's not washing his hands before dinner. This they made (but without any warrant for it) a religious act; abounding in external washings, but neglecting the inward purgation of their hearts and consciences from sin and uncleanness. Thus Pharisaical hypocrisy puts God off with outward cleansing instead of inward purity; regarding more the outward cleanness of the hand, than the inward purity of the heart. Observe, 3. Our blessed Saviour does not condemn any external decency and cleanliness in conversation, but his design is to show the vanity of outward purity without inward sanctity, and to convince them of the necessity of cleansing the heart, in order to the purifying and reforming the life. The Pharisee washed his hands clean, but left his soul full of uncleanness; not considering that he that made the soul as well as the body, requires that both should be kept pure, all the impiety of men's lives proceeding from the impurity of their hearts and natures.

41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

As if Christ had said, The way to purify your meats, and drinks, and estates, from all pollution cleaving to them, and to have them sanctified blessings to you, is (in conjunction with other graces) by doing works of mercy, and by liberal alms-giving according to your ability. Learn, That charity and alms-giving according to our ability and opportunity, is a special mean to sanctify our estates to us, and to cause us holily and comfortably to enjoy whatever we do possess: *Give alms of such things as ye have; and behold, all things are clean unto you.* As if Christ had said, Your temporal enjoyments are unclean,

that is, unlawful to be used by you, till you have sanctified them by some act of charity, which will procure a blessing upon your substance.

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Our Saviour here denounces a woe against the Pharisees for their strict and scrupulous observing the lesser things of the law, as tithing mint and rue, whilst they were regardless of the principal and substantial duties which they owed both to God and man. Learn hence, That although some duties are of greater moment and importance than others, yet a good man will omit none, but make conscience of all, both great and small, in obedience to the command of God. There is no duty so little as to be neglected, no command so small as to be disobeyed; but yet there is a difference in duties, and our first regard ought to be to the greater, then to the less. Christ doth not condemn them for tithing mint and rue, but for passing over judgment and the love of God.

43 Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

The next woe denounced against the Pharisees is for their ambition, pride, and popularity, affecting the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the markets; where their fault was, not in taking, but in affecting these uppermost places. God is the God of order; there may and ought to be a precedency amongst persons. Honour is to be given to whom honour is due, and that by God's command. But pride and ambition are detestable vices, especially in such as are preachers, and ought to be patterns of humility.

44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

Another woe is here denounced against the Pharisees, for cheating and deceiving the people with an outward show and appearance of piety and religion. They



were like graves and sepulchres grown over with grass, which though they held dead men's bones, yet the putrefaction not outwardly appearing, men walked unawares over them, and so were polluted by them, intimating, that the inward rottenness and filthy corruptions of the Pharisees not appearing unto men, the people were easily deceived by outward shows of Pharisaical sanctity, and so fell into a dangerous imitation of them. Learn thence, That the great design of hypocrites is to cheat the world with an empty show of piety: the hypocrite's ambition is to be thought good, not to be so. Learn, 2. That nothing is more fatally dangerous to the souls of men, and draws persons to an admiration and imitation of hypocritical professors, like their outward shows of sanctity, and their extraordinary appearances of devotion and piety. This it was that gained the Pharisees such a veneration and esteem among the people, that it became a proverb among them. "If but two men went to heaven, the one must be a Pharisee:" but their counterfeit piety being double iniquity, they did receive for it double damnation.

45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also. 46 And he said, Woe unto you also ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

The former woes were denounced by our Saviour against the Pharisees, who had their names from an Hebrew word, which signifies to *separate*, because they were persons separated and set apart for studying the law of God, and teaching it to others. The next woe is here denounced against the lawyers, that is, the scribes of the law, of which there were two sorts, the civil scribe and the ecclesiastical scribe. The civil scribe was a public notary, or a register of the synagogue, employed in writing bills of divorce, and sentences in the phylacteries. The ecclesiastical scribe was an expounder of the scripture, an interpreter of the law; men of great learning and knowledge, whose decrees and interpretations the Pharisees strictly observed. This lawyer here insolently calls our Saviour's reproof a reproach: however, our Saviour, who never feared the face or regarded the person of any man, gives them their portion, and lets them know

wherein they were faulty as well as the Pharisees, and accordingly pronounces a woe unto them also, for a threefold crime: 1. For their laying heavy burdens upon others' shoulders, which they would not touch with one of their fingers. These burdens in general were a rigid exaction of obedience in the whole ceremonial law, and in particular the burden of traditions, certain austerities and severities, which they imposed upon the people, but would not undergo any part of them themselves. In vain do we hope to oblige our hearers to follow those rules of life, which we refuse or neglect to put in practice ourselves.

47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute; 50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

The second crime which Christ reproves in these men, is their grand hypocrisy, in pretending great honour to the saints departed, building their tombs, and garnishing their sepulchres, declaiming against their fathers' impiety, that had they lived in their days, they would not have been partakers with them in their sins. Now their hypocrisy appeared in three particulars. 1. In that they continued in their own wickedness, and yet commended the saints departed; they magnify the saints, but multiply their sins, and instead of imitating their virtues, they content themselves with garnishing their sepulchres. 2. In professing great respect to the dead saints, and at the same time persecuting the living. Palpable hypocrisy! and yet, as gross as it is, prevails to this day. The church of Rome, which magnifies martyrs, canonizes saints departed, have added to their number, by shedding of their blood. 3. In

taking false measures of their love to the saints departed, from their building their tombs, and garnishing their sepulchres. Whereas the best evidence of our love to them, is the imitating their virtues, and cherishing their followers. 'Tis gross hypocrisy to pay respect to the relics of saints, and veneration to their images, and at the same time to persecute and hate their followers. From the whole, note, 1. That the world has all along loved dead saints better than living ones, *Mortui non moriuntur*: The dead saint's example, how bright soever, is not scorching and troublesome at a distance, and he himself stands no longer in other men's light; whereas the living saint's example is a cutting reproof to sin and vice. Note, 2. That there is a certain civility in human nature, which leads men to a just commendation of the dead, and to a due estimation of their worth. The Pharisees here, though they persecuted the prophets whilst alive, yet did they pretend to a mighty veneration for their piety and virtue after they were dead, and thought no honour too great to be done unto them. Note, 3. That it is the greatest hypocrisy imaginable to pretend to love goodness, and at the same time to hate and persecute good men. These Pharisees and lawyers pretended high to piety and religion, and at the same time killed the prophets. Note, 4. That the highest honour we can pay to the saints departed, is not by raising monuments, and building tombs to their memory, but by a careful imitation of their piety and virtue, following the holiness of their lives, and their patience and constancy at their death. Lastly learn, That it is a righteous thing with God to punish children for the impiety of their parents, when they walk in their ungodly parents' footsteps: Upon you shall come the blood of all the prophets, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias: yet must this be understood of temporal evils, not of eternal punishments; no man for his father's sins shall lie down in everlasting burnings: as our fathers' faith will not let us into heaven, so neither will their impiety shut us into hell. At the day of judgment every man shall be separately considered according to his own deeds.

52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in your-

selves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

The last woe pronounced by our Saviour against the scribes and Pharisees, is for perverting the holy scriptures, and keeping the true sense and knowledge of them from the people: this St. Luke here calls, *the taking away the key of knowledge from men*, alluding to a custom among the Jews, in admission of their doctors; those that had authority given them to interpret the law and the prophets, were solemnly admitted into that office, by delivering to them a key and a table-book: so that by the key of knowledge is meant the interpretation and understanding of the scriptures; and by taking away that key is signified, 1. That they arrogated to themselves the sole power of understanding and interpreting the holy scriptures. 2. That they kept the true knowledge of the scriptures from the people, especially the prophecies which concern the kingdom and coming of the Messias; and so they hindered men from embracing our Saviour's doctrine who were otherwise well enough disposed for it. Learn, 1. That the written word is the key whereby an entrance into heaven is opened unto men. 2. That the use of this key, or the knowledge of the word of God, is absolutely and indispensably necessary in order to salvation. 3. That great is the guilt, and inexcusable the fault, of those who deny the people the use of this key, and deprive them of the knowledge of the holy scriptures, which alone can make them wise unto salvation. 4. That such as do so, shut the kingdom of heaven against men, endeavouring what in them lies to hinder their salvation. Men may miscarry with their knowledge, but they are sure to perish for lack of knowledge.

53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; 54 Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Observe here, 1. How our blessed Saviour's plain and faithful dealing with these men, doth enrage instead of reforming them; they are filled with anger and indignation. 2. Their wrath sets their wits on work to ensnare him. Lord! when

any of thy faithful ministers and ambassadors meet with the like usage and treatment from a wicked world; when any lie in wait to catch something out of our mouth, that therewith they may ensnare us, give us thy prudence and thy patience, that we may cut off occasion, from those that seek occasion against us, and disappoint them of their purpose; or else furnish us with such measures of meekness and patience, as becomes persons of our holy character and profession, that we may glory in reproaches, in persecutions and distresses, for Christ's sake, and that the spirit of glory and of God may rest upon us.

### CHAP. XII.

**I**N the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, inso-much that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. **2** For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. **3** Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear, in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

In this chapter our blessed Saviour furnishes his disciples with many instructions for the worthy discharge of their function in preaching the gospel; particularly he recommends unto them two gracious qualifications, namely, uprightness and sincerity, ver. 1, 2, 3. Secondly, courage and magnanimity, ver. 4, 5. **1.** He recommends unto them the grace and virtue of sincerity: *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.* Learn hence, that hypocrisy is a dangerous leaven, which ministers and people are chiefly to beware of, and to preserve themselves from. Hypocrisy is a vice in vizard; the face is vice, the vizard is virtue; God is pretended, self intended: hypocrisy is remembered to leaven; partly for its sourness, partly for its diffusiveness. Leaven is a piece of sour dough, that diffuses itself into the whole mass or lump of bread with which it is mixed. Thus hypocrisy spreads over all the man; all his duties, parts and performances, are leavened with it. Again, Leaven is of a swelling,

as well as of a spreading, nature; it puffs up the dough, and so doth hypocrisy the heart. The Pharisees were a sour and proud sort of people; they were all for pre-eminence, chief places, chief seats, chief titles, to be called *Rabbi, Rabbi*; in a word, as leaven is hardly discerned from good dough at first sight, so is hypocrisy hardly discerned and distinguished from sincerity. The Pharisees outwardly appeared righteous unto men, but within were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Observe next, The argument which Christ uses to dissuade men from hypocrisy: *There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed.* As if he had said, The day is coming, when a rotten and corrupt heart shall no longer pass under the vizard and disguise of a demure look. In the day of judgment hypocritical sinners shall walk naked; God, angels, and men, shall see their shame. Learn hence, That God will certainly, ere long, wash off all the varnish and paint which the hypocrite has put upon the face of his profession, and lay him open to the terror of himself, and the astonishment of the world.

**4** And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: **5** But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

The second duty which our Saviour presses upon his disciples, is that of holy courage and resolution: as if Christ had said, The preaching of the gospel will stir up many enemies against you, which will malign and oppose you, vex and persecute you; but I say unto you, fear them not who can only kill the body; but fear him who, if you fail in your duty, can cast both body and soul into hell. Here note, **1.** An unwarrantable fear condemned, and that is, the sinful, servile, slavish fear of man: *Fear not them that kill the body.* **2.** An holy, awful, and prudent fear of the omnipotent God commended: *Fear him that is able to kill both body and soul.* **3.** The persons whom this duty of fear is recommended to, and bound upon; disciples, ministers, and ambassadors, all the friends of Christ. They not only may, but ought to fear him; not only for his greatness and goodness, but upon the ac-

count of his punitive justice, as being able to cast both soul and body into hell. Such a fear is not only lawful, but laudable; not only commendable, but commanded, and not misbecoming the friends of Christ. The ministers of God may use arguments from fear of judgments, both to dissuade from sin, and to persuade to duty. It is not unsuitable to the best of saints to keep in heaven's way for fear of hell; 'tis good to bid a friend fear, when that fear tendeth to his good.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Observe here, 1. The doctrine which our Saviour preaches to his disciples: and that is, the doctrine of the divine providence, which concerns itself for the meanest of creatures. Even the birds of the air, and the hairs of our heads, do fall within the compass of God's protecting care. Observe, 2. The use which our Saviour makes of this doctrine: namely, to fortify his disciples' spirits against all distrustful fears, and distracting cares. Learn hence, 1. That the consideration of the divine care, and gracious providence of God over us and ours, ought to antidote our spirits against all distrustful fears whatsoever. If an hair from the head falls not to the ground without a providence, much less shall the head itself. If the very excrements of the body (such are the hairs) be taken care of by God, surely the more noble parts of the body, but especially the noblest part of ourselves, our soul, shall fall under his peculiar regard.

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; 9 But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.

Note here, 1. That not to confess Christ, is in his account to deny him, and to be ashamed of him. 2. That whosoever shall deny or be ashamed of Christ, either in his person, in his gospel, or in his members, for any fear or favour of man, shall with shame be disowned, and eternally rejected

by him at the dreadful judgment of the great day. Christ may be denied three ways: doctrinally, by an erroneous and heretical judgment; verbally, by oral expressions; vitally, by a wicked and unholy life: but woe to that soul that denies Christ any of these ways!

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.

Although never man preached or lived as Christ did, yet there were those that spake against him; the person of Jesus was contemned and reproached, for the meanness of his birth, for the poverty of his condition, for the freedom of his conversation; but this sin did not exclude the hope of pardon: *Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him*: all the reproaches cast upon Christ, as man, were pardonable: *But whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him*; that is, whoever affirms that divine power by which I do my miracles, to be the power of the devil, such blasphemy will be unpardonable, because it is to resist the last remedy, and to oppose the best means of men's conviction; for what could be done more to convince men that Christ was the true and promised Messiah, than to work so many miracles before their eyes to that purpose. Now these miracles, though evidently wrought by the power of God, the Pharisees ascribed to the power of the devil, which our Saviour calls *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, and a sin unpardonable.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Here our Saviour acquaints his apostles, that for preaching his doctrine, and professing his religion, they should be brought before all sorts of magistrates, and into all kinds of courts; but advises them, when they should be so brought, not to be anxiously thoughtful, or solicitously careful what they should say, for it should be suggested to them by the Holy Ghost, what they should speak

in that hour. Thence note; That though the truth of Christ may be opposed, yet the defenders of it shall never be ashamed; for rather than they shall want a tongue to plead for it, God himself will prompt them by his Holy Spirit, and furnish them with such arguments to defend the truth, as all their adversaries shall not be able to gainsay: *In that hour the Holy Ghost shall teach you what ye ought to say.*

13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

Whilst our Saviour was thus instructing his disciples and the rest of his auditors, in things appertaining to the kingdom of heaven; one of the company being more intent, as it seems, upon his temporal than his eternal concerns, desired him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Christ tells him, he would neither be judge nor arbitrator in any civil affairs, or secular concerns. This work, as if Christ had said, belongs to the civil magistrate, to divide inheritances, and decide controversies betwixt man and man; but my work is of another nature, namely, to preach the gospel to a lost world, and to direct men how to secure an inheritance in heaven, not to divide inheritances here on earth. Teaching us, That matters of civil justice do not belong to those whom Christ sends forth to preach the gospel; that work alone is sufficient for them: the proper work of a minister is work enough; one branch of which is to manage a persuading task betwixt neighbour and neighbour, to prevent differences, and to compose them: but as Christ's commissioners and ministers of the gospel, they have no authority to intermeddle in civil judgments: *Who made me a judge over you?* said our great Master; that is, a judge in civil affairs.

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Our Saviour, upon the occasion given him in the foregoing verses, admonishes all his disciples and followers to take heed and beware of the sin of covetousness, assuring them, that neither the comfort nor

continuance of man's life doth consist in an abundance; for though something of this world's goods is necessary to the comfort and happiness of life, yet abundance is not necessary. Here observe, 1. The manner of our Lord's caution: he doubles it; not saying, *take heed* alone, or *beware* only; but *take heed*, and *beware*, both. This argues that there is a strong inclination in our natures to this sin; the great danger we are in of falling into it, and of what fatal consequence it is to them in whom this sin reigns. Observe, 2. The matter of the caution, of the sin which our Saviour warns his hearers against, and that is covetousness: *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.* Where, under the name and notion of covetousness, our Saviour doth not condemn a provident care for the things of this life, nor a regular industry and diligence for obtaining of them, nor every degree of love and affection to them; but by covetousness, is to be understood an eager and insatiable desire after the things of this life, or using unjust ways and means to get or increase an estate; seeking the things of this life with the neglect of things infinitely better, and placing their chief happiness in riches. Observe, 3. The reason of this caution: *Because a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* Human life is sustained by a little; therefore abundance is not necessary either to the support, or comfort of it. 'Tis not a great estate and vast possessions that make a man happy in this world, but a mind suited to our condition, whatever it be.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, *Thou fool!* this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.

The design and scope of our Saviour in this parable, is to show men the vileness and vanity of the sin of covetousness, or an eager and insatiable desire after the things of this world. When men heap up riches, and lay up treasures in this life, taking no care to be rich towards God in faith and good works, our Saviour illustrates this by the parable of a rich man, whom God had blessed with great plenty, yet his desire of more wealth was never satisfied, but he is projecting how he may lay up goods in store for many years. Where note, 1. That the parable doth not intimate any indirect and unjust ways of gain which this man used to increase his estate, but condemns his insatiable desire and thirst after more. So that hence we may learn, That an eager and inordinate desire after the things of this world, though it be free from injustice, and doing wrong to others, is one species, or kind, of the sin of covetousness. Observe, 2. How this rich man looked no farther than himself, not looking upon himself as God's steward, but his own carver; he cries out, *What shall I do, because I have no room where to lay my fruits?* Not considering that the houses of the poor should have been his granaries for the abundance of his increase. Charity to the necessitous is the best way of bestowing our abundance. God's extraordinary bounty is to be laid out for the relief of others' necessities, not for the gratifying of our own luxurious desires. Observe, 3. The brand of infamy which the wise God fixes upon this covetous rich man: *Thou fool*, says God. Learn thence, That it is an act and instance of the most egregious folly imaginable, for persons to spend their time and strength in getting and laying up treasure upon earth; in the mean time neglecting to be rich towards God in faith and good works: *Thou fool*. Observe, 4. The doleful tidings and threatening news brought unto him: *This night thy soul shall be required of thee*. Learn hence, 1. That a man's wealth is not able to preserve his life, much less to save his soul: and if wealth cannot save a man's life, why should men endanger their lives, nay, hazard their souls, to get or increase wealth? Learn, 2. That God takes away men's lives many times when they least suspect it: *This night*, says God; *many*

*years*, says he. God will not have us think of rest in a place of disquiet, nor of certainty in a condition of inconstancy; we are dependent creatures, and our time is in God's hand: *This night shall thy soul be taken away from thee*. Learn, 3. That the souls of ungodly men are taken from them by force and compulsion: *Thy soul shall be required of thee*. Good men have the same reluctances of nature which others have, yet they sweetly resign their souls into the hands of God in a dying hour; whereas a wicked man, though he sometimes dies by his own hand, yet he never dies with the consent of his own will; he chooses rather to eat dust (with the serpent) than to return to dust. Observe, 5. The expository question: *Whose then shall those things be, which thou hast provided?* Intimating, 1. That they should not be his: a man's wealth lasts no longer than his life, neither has he any longer the comfort of it: lay up gold, and it perishes with thee; but treasure up grace, and it shall accompany thee: *Whose shall those things be?* Not thine, undoubtedly. 2. As these things shall not be thine, when thou art gone, so thou knowest not whose they shall be after thou art gone; whether they shall fall into the hand of a child or a stranger; of a wise man or a fool: the wealthiest man cannot be certain who shall be his heir, and whose goods his shall be. Observe lastly, The application which our Saviour makes of this parable to his disciples: *So is every one that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God*. Learn hence, That such as are not rich in grace, rich in good works, shall find no benefit by, and take no comfort in, all their worldly riches in the time of their greatest need, at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. Learn farther, How brutish and unworthy of a man it was, for this person to cheer up his soul with the hopes of worldly provisions, to bid his soul eat, drink, and be merry. Alas! the soul can no more eat, drink, and be merry with carnal things, than the body can with spiritual and immaterial things: it cannot feed upon bread that perisheth; but bring it to a reconciled God in Christ, to the covenant of grace, and sweet promises of the gospel; set before it the joys and comforts of the Spirit; and if it be a sanctified and renewed soul, it can make a rich feast upon these. Spiritual things are proper food for spiritual souls; deservedly then is this person

branded with the name of *fool*, for saying, *Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years ; eat, drink, and be merry.*

22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat ; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23 The life is more than meat, and the body is *more* than raiment. 24 Consider the ravens : for they neither sow nor reap ; which neither have storehouse nor barn ; and God feedeth them. How much much more are ye better than the fowls ? 25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit ? 26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest ? 27 Consider the lilies how they grow ; they toil not, they spin not : and yet I say unto you, That Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith ? 29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after : and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

There is a twofold sense and interpretation given of these verses. 1. Some take them as spoken only to the apostles, directing them absolutely to cast off all care for the things of this life, that so they might attend upon Christ's person, and wholly give up themselves to that work to which he had called them : and therefore St. Luke here takes notice, that after he had cautioned his hearers in general against covetousness, he applies himself particularly to his disciples, and tells them, that he would have them so far from this sin of covetousness, that they should not use that ordinary care, and common industry about the things of this life, which is not only lawful but necessary for men in all ordinary cases, verse 22. *And he said unto his disciples, There-*

*fore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or drink.*

But if we understand the words in this sense, we must look upon it only as a temporary command, given to the apostles for that time only ; like that in St. *Matt.* x. 9. *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses : neither coat nor scrip ;* which no man ever understood as a general law to all christians, but as a particular precept to the apostles at that time. 2. Others understand these injunctions of our Saviour to be consistent with a prudent and provident care for the things of this life, not forbidding a regular industry and diligence for the obtaining of them, but condemning only an anxious, vexatious, tormenting care, and an over-solicitous diligence for the things of this life ; and taking our Saviour's words for a general and standing rule to all christians, they only forbid distrustful thoughtfulness, distracting cares, which drive a man's mind this way and that way, (like meteors or clouds in the air, as the word signifies.) Now against this vexatious care, and solicitous thoughtfulness, our Saviour propounds many weighty arguments or considerations ; four especially. He tells us, such cares are needless, fruitless, heathenish, and brutish. 1. 'Tis needless : *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things*, and will certainly provide for you ; and what need you take care, and God too ? cast your care upon him. 2. 'Tis fruitless : *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature ?* We may sooner by our carping care add a furlong to our grief, than a cubit to our comfort. All our own care, without God's help, will neither feed us when we are hungry, nor nourish us when we are fed. 3. 'Tis heathenish : *After all these things do the Gentiles seek*, *Matt.* vi. 32. The ends and objects of a christian's thoughts ought to be higher and more sublime than that of heathens. Lastly, 'Tis brutish, nay, worse than brutish. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the ravens of the valley, all are fed and sustained by God, without any care of their own ; much more shall his children. Has God a breakfast ready for every little bird that comes chirping out of its nest, and for every beast of the field that comes leaping out of its den ; and will he not much more provide for you ? Surely, that God that feeds the ravens when they cry, will not starve his children when they pray.

**31** But rather seek ye the kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be added unto you.

As if Christ had said, Let your first and chief care be to promote the kingdom of grace in this world, and to secure the kingdom of glory in the next, and then fear not the want of these outward comforts ; they shall be added in measure, though not in excess ; to satisfy, though not to satiate ; for health, though not for surfeit. Learn, 1. That christians ought not to be so solicitous about the necessities and conveniences of this life, as about the happiness of the next : *Rather seek ye the kingdom of God.* 2. That heaven or the kingdom of God, must be sought in the first place ; that is, with our principal care and chief endayours. 3. That heaven being once secured by us, all earthly things shall be superadded to us as God sees needful and convenient for us. But few men like our Saviour's method ; they would seek the things of this world in the first place, and get to heaven at last ; they would be content to seek the world, and to have heaven thrown in without their seeking : but this will not be granted ; if we make religion, and the salvation of our souls, our first and chief care, *all other things shall be added unto us*, so far as the wisdom of God sees them fit and convenient for us.

**32** Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

That is, fear not the want of any of these comforts, and be not over solicitous for them ; for your Father, which has provided a kingdom for you hereafter, will not suffer you to want such things as are needful for you here. Learn, 1. That the disciples of Christ are very subject to disquieting and perplexing fears, but must by no means cherish, but oppose them : a fear of present wants, a fear of future sufferings, a fear of death approaching, a fear that they shall not find acceptance with God, a fear lest they should fall foully or finally from God ; the fear of all these evils doth oftentimes disturb them and discompose them. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd of his church : the love and care, the compassion and tenderness, the prudence and providence, the guidance and vigilance, of a good shepherd, are found with him. 3. As Christ is the church's Shepherd, so the church is Christ's flock, though a little

flock, in opposition to the huge herds and droves of the men of the world. 4. That God the Father has a kingdom in store for his little flock, his church and children. 5. That the good will and gracious pleasure of God is the original spring, and fountal cause, from whence all divine favours do proceed and flow : *It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

**33** Sell that ye have, and give alms ; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. **34** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The next duty which our Saviour exhorts his disciples to, is the duty of alms-giving ; that they should be so far from distrusting God's provision for themselves, that they should be always forward to a ready distribution towards others ; yea, in cases of necessity, to be willing to sell their goods to relieve others : yet this precept is not to be taken as if it concerned all persons, at all times, and in all places ; but respects only cases of extreme necessity ; or if it concerns all, it is only as to the readiness and preparation of the mind ; that when necessity calls for it, we be found willing to part with any thing we have for the relief of Christ in his members. Observe also, The argument used to excite to this duty of alms-giving : hereby we lay up our treasure in a safe hand, even in God's, who will reward us openly. The bellies of the poor are bags that wax not old ; what is lodged there is laid up securely out of the reach of danger. We imitate the wise merchant in transmitting our estates into another world, by bills of exchange, where we are sure to receive our own with usury.

**35** Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning ; **36** And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding ; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

The next duty Christ exhorts his disciples to, is that of watchfulness with reference to his second coming : *Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning.* The words may be understood two ways, spoken either in a martial phrase, as to soldiers ;



or in a domestic, as to servants ; if as to soldiers, then let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, in as much as that we should be always ready for a march, having our armour on, and our match lighted, ready to give fire at the alarm of temptation. If the words are spoken as to servants, then our Master bids us carefully expect his second coming, like a lord's returning from a wedding-supper, (which used to be celebrated in the night,) that they should not put off their clothes, nor put out their lights, but stand ready to open, though he comes at midnight. When Christ comes, that soul only shall have his blessing whom he finds watching.

37 Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching : verily I say unto you, That he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. 39 And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40 Be ye therefore ready also : for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Here our Saviour makes use of several arguments to enforce the duty of watchfulness upon his disciples ; the first is drawn from the transcendent reward which Christ will bestow upon his watchful servants : *He will gird himself, make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them* ; a very high metaphorical expression ; as if a master should be so transported with the diligence and faithfulness of his servant, as to vouchsafe not only to let him sit down to meat in his presence, but to take the napkin upon his arm, and wait upon him himself at his table. Lord, how poor and how inconsiderable is that service, which the best of us do for thee ! and yet thou speakest of it as if thou wert beholden to us for it. Thou dost not only administer to us a supper, but thou ministerest and waitest upon us at supper : *He will gird himself, and*

*serve them*. The second argument to excite to watchfulness is drawn from the benefit which we have received by watching in this life ; that let the Lord come when he will, whether in the second or third watch, they shall be found ready, and in a blessed condition, who are found diligent in his service, and waiting for his appearance. Note here, 1. The Son of man will certainly come at one hour or other. 2. At what hour the Son of man will come, cannot certainly be known. 3. That there is no hour wherein we can promise ourselves that the Son of man will not come. 4. Very joyful will the coming of the Son of man be, if we be found upon our watch, and ready for his coming : *Be ye therefore ready also ; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not*.

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all ? 42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them* *their* portion of meat in due season ? 43 Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. 44 Of a truth I say unto you, That he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

These words may be applied these two ways : First, to all the faithful servants of God in general ; and then the note is this, That for a christian to spend and end his days in the service of Christ, and doing his will, gives good assurance of a happy and blessed condition : *Blessed is that servant*. Secondly, These words may be applied to the ministers of the gospel in special ; and then observe, 1. The character and duty of a gospel minister ; he is the steward of Christ's household, to give them their meat in due season. 2. A double qualification requisite in such stewards : namely, prudence and faithfulness. Who then is that faithful and wise steward ? Observe, 3. The reward insured to such stewards, with whom are found these qualifications : *Blessed is that servant*. Learn hence, 1. That the ministers of the gospel are in a spiritual sense stewards of Christ's household. 2. That faithfulness and prudence are the indispensable qualifications of Christ's stewards. 3. That where these qualifications

are found, Christ will graciously and abundantly reward them. Our faithfulness must respect God, ourselves, and our flock; and includes integrity of heart, purity of intention, industry of endeavour, and impartiality in all our administrations. Our prudence must appear in the choice of suitable subjects, in the choice of fit language, in exciting our own affections in order to the moving of our people's. Ministerial prudence also must teach us, by the strictness and gravity of our deportment, to maintain our authority, and keep up our esteem in the consciences of our people: it will also assist us to bear reproach, and direct us to give reproof: he that is silent cannot be innocent: reprove we must, or we cannot be faithful; but prudently, or we cannot be successful.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the mea-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken: 46 The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Our Lord in these verses describes a negligent and unfaithful steward of his household, and then declares that dreadful sentence of wrath which hangs over him. The unfaithful steward, or negligent minister of the gospel, is described; 1. By his infidelity: he believeth not Christ's coming to judgment, though he preaches it to others; *He saith in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming.* 2. He is described by his hatred, envy, and malignity, against his fellow servants, that were more faithful than himself: *He begins to smite them*, at least with the virulence of his tongue, if not with the vio-

lence of his hand. 3. He is farther described by his associating with the wicked, and strengthening their hands by his ill example: *He eateth and drinketh with the drunken*; that is, as their associate and fellow-companion. Thus the negligent steward and unfaithful minister is described. Next his sentence is declared. 1. Christ will surprise him in his sin and security, *by coming at an hour when he looketh not for him.* 2. He will execute temporal vengeance upon him; *he will cut him in pieces*, as the Jews did their sacrifices, dividing them into two parts. Hence some observe, That God seldom suffers slothful, sensual ministers to live out half their days. 3. Christ will punish them with eternal destruction also: *Appoint them their portion with unbelievers.* Teaching us, That such ministers as neglect the service of God, and the souls of their people, as they are ranked amongst the worst sort of sinners in this life, so shall they be punished with them in the severest manner in the next. When Satan destroys the souls of men, he shall answer for it as a murderer only, not as an officer that was intrusted with the care of souls. But if the steward doth not provide, if the shepherd doth not feed, if the watchman doth not warn, they shall answer, not only for the souls that have miscarried, but for an office neglected, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully managed. Woe unto us, if at the great day we hear distressed souls roaring out their complaints, and howling out that doleful accusation against us, saying, "Lord, our stewards have defrauded us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our guides have misled us," ver. 48.—*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* Hence we learn, 1. That whatever we receive from God, is both a gift and a talent. 2. That every one has some gift or talent from God to be improved for God. 3. That God's gifts or talents are not given to all in the same measure. 4. That whether we receive little or much, all is in order to an account. 5. That answerable to our present talents will be our future accounts. The greater opportunities a man has of knowing his duty, and the greater abilities he has for doing good, if he do it not, the greater will be his condemnation, because the neglect of his duty in this case cannot be without a great deal of wilfulness and contempt, which is an heinous aggravation.

If thy gifts be mean, the less thou hast to account for; if greater than others, God expects thou shouldst do more good than others, for *where much is given, much will be required.*

49 I am to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled? 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! 51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother: the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Our Saviour in these verses declares what will be the accidental event and effect, but not the natural tendency, of his religion; so that we must distinguish between the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental event of it. Christ's intentional aim, was to plant, propagate, and promote, peace in the world; but through the lusts and corruptions of men's natures, the issue and event of his coming is war and division; not that these are the genuine and natural fruits of the gospel, but occasional and accidental only. Hence learn, That the preaching of the gospel, and setting up the kingdom of Christ, though it be not the genuine and natural cause, yet it is the accidental occasion of all that war and tumult, of all that dissension and division, of all that distraction and confusion which the world abounds with: *I am come to send fire on the earth.* He is said to send the fire of dissension, because he foresaw this would be the certain consequence, though not the proper and natural effect, of the preaching of the gospel. There was another fire of Christ's sending, the Holy Spirit; this was a fire to warm, not to burn, or if so, not men's persons, but corruptions; but that seems not to be intended in this place. Observe farther, The metaphor by which Christ sets forth his own suffer-

ings; he styles them a baptism: *I have a baptism to be baptized with.* There is a threefold baptism spoken of: a baptism with water, a baptism of the Spirit; both these Christ had been baptized with: but the third was the baptism of blood; he was soon to be drenched and washed in his own blood, in the garden, and on the cross; and he was straitened or pained with desire, like a woman in travail, till his sufferings were accomplished.

54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower: and so it is. 55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat: and it cometh to pass. 56 Ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? 57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

Our Saviour in these words doth at once upbraid the stupid ignorance of the Jews in general, and the obstinate infidelity of the Pharisees in particular, in that they could make a judgment of the weather by the sight of the sky, by the appearance of the heavens, and the motion of the winds, but could not discern this time of the Messiah, though they had so many miraculous signs and evidences of it; and for this he upbraids them with hypocrisy: *Ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky, but you do not discern this time.* Learn thence, That to pretend either more ignorance, or greater uncertainty, in discerning the signs of gospel-times (the time of our gracious visitation) than the signs of the weather, is great hypocrisy: *Ye hypocrites! can ye not discern this time?* Observe farther, That Christ does not here condemn the study of nature, or making observations of the state of the weather by the face of the sky; for Almighty God, by natural signs, gives us warning of a change in natural things; and in like manner, by his providential dispensations, he gives us warning of a change in civil things: *He that is wise will observe both, and by their observation will come to understand the pleasure of the Lord.*

58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou

art in the way give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. 50 I tell thee, Thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

In these words our Saviour advises persons to use the same prudence in divine matters, which they use in worldly affairs, and the same endeavours to seek reconciliation with God, which they put forth in order to their being reconciled unto men; for in such a case, when they see an action bringing against them, wherein they are sure to be cast, their best way is presently to seek to reconcile their adversary, and make their peace with him, that so they may escape the threatening danger: in like manner should they do here, lay hold upon the present opportunity of mercy now offered to them; because it is a fearful thing to die without reconciliation with God. Note here, 1. That God and man were once friends. 2. That God and man are now adversaries. 3. That man, and not God, is averse to reconciliation and agreement. 4. That it is the wisdom, the duty, and interest, of fallen man, speedily to accept of terms of peace and reconciliation with God. 5. That an eternal prison will be their portion, who die in their enmity against God.

### CHAP. XIII.

**T**HERE were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

There were two eminent sects among the Jews in our Saviour's time, namely, the Herodians and Galileans; the former stood stiffly for having tribute paid to the Roman emperor, whose subjects the Jews now were; but the Galileans (so called probably from Judas of Galilee, mentioned Acts v. 37.) opposed this tribute, and often

raised rebellion against the Roman power. Pilate takes the opportunity when these Galileans were come up at the passover, and sacrificing in the temple, to fall upon them with his soldiers, and barbarously mingled their own blood with the blood of the sacrifices which they offered; neither the holiness of the place (the temple) nor the sacredness of the action (sacrificing) could divert Pilate from his barbarous impiety. Our Saviour, understanding that some of his hearers then present concluded these persons to be the greatest sinners, because they were the greatest sufferers, he corrects their errors in this matter, and assures them, that the same or like judgments did hang over all other sinners, as well as these, if timely and sincere repentance prevented not. Learn hence, 1. That a violent and sudden death is no argument of God's disfavour. 2. That notwithstanding persons are exceeding prone to pass rash censures and an uncharitable judgment upon such as die suddenly, especially if they die violently. 3. That none justly can conclude such persons to have been the greatest sinners who have been in this world the most signal sufferers. 4. That the best use we can make of such instances and examples of God's severity, is to examine our own lives, and by a speedy repentance to prevent our own perdition: *I tell you, Nay, &c.*

4 Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Another instance our Saviour gives of persons that fell by a sudden death, even eighteen that were slain by the fall of a tower in Jerusalem. He takes occasion from thence to caution the Jews, that they did not rigidly censure the sufferers, or conclude that those have wrought the most sin, who are brought to most shame. Oh! how ready are we to judge of men's eternal condition, by their present visitation; and to conclude them the greatest offenders, upon whom God inflicts the most visible punishments! Our Saviour forbids this, and advises every one to look at home, telling the whole body of the Jews, that if they did not repent, they should all likewise perish, and that two ways: 1. *Certitudine pœnæ,*

by as certain a punishment as these did ; 2. Ye shall likewise perish, *similitudine pœnæ*, by the same kind of punishment ; you shall perish by the ruin of your whole city, as they did by the downfall of that tower, if a timely and sincere repentance doth not intervene. Learn hence, That we must judge of persons by their conversation towards God, and not by God's dispensation towards them ; all things here fall alike to all. A sudden death, yes, a violent death, as it comes upon many men, so it may come upon the best of men, as well as others : think not, says Christ, that those eighteen were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things, *I tell you, Nay ; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Teaching us, That repentance is the only way and means to prevent punishment here, and perishing hereafter : *Except ye repent, ye shall perish.*

6 He spake also this parable : A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none : cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ?

Our blessed Saviour, that he might excite the Jews to the practice of the last mentioned duty of repentance, sets forth his long-suffering with them, and forbearance towards them, by the parable of the fig-tree, which the Master of the vineyard had long expected fruit therefrom, but found none. Where note, 1. The great care that God takes to make poor sinners happy ; he plants them in his church, as in a vineyard, that by the cultivating care of his ministers, and the fructifying influences of his Spirit, they may be fruitful in good works. Note, 2. That God keeps an exact account or reckoning, what means and advantages every place and people have enjoyed ; *These three years* have I come seeking fruit, alluding to the three years of his own ministry among them. God keeps a memorial how many years the gospel has been amongst a people, how many ministers they have had, and how long with them, what pathological exhortations, what pressing admonitions, what cutting reproofs ;

all are upon the file, and must be accounted for. Learn, 3. That God expects suitable and proportionable fruit from a people, according to the time of their standing in his vineyard, and answering to the cost and culture which his ministers have expended upon them, and the pains they have taken with them. Note further, 4. That although God doth and justly may expect fruit from such as are planted, in his vineyard, to wit, the christian church, yet he expects it with much patience and forbearance, waiting from year to year, to see if time will work amendment. *These three years I have come seeking fruit, and found none.* Lastly, If after all the cost that God has bestowed upon a people by his ministers and ordinances, they continue unfruitful, there is nothing to be expected but excision and final destruction : *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ?*

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it : 9 And if it bear fruit, well ; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Observe here, 1. The vine-dresser's petition and request, *Lord, let it alone this year also.* This points out unto us the office and duty of the ministers of God, who are labourers in his vineyard, to be intercessors with God, for sparing a barren and unfruitful people. Lord ! spare them a little longer, *Let alone this year also.* If they cannot absolutely prevent judgment coming upon an unfruitful people, yet they endeavour to respite it, and delay its coming all they can. Observe, 2. The condition upon which the vine-dresser's petition is grounded, *Till I shall dig about it, and dung it ;* phrases which intimate unto us the nature and quality of the ministerial work and service, signifying it to be a very difficult and laborious service. Digging is a painful work, and a spending work : and such is our ministerial work, if followed as it ought to be. We deal in mysteries, in the deep things of God, which are not received without much digging. Observe, 3. A double supposition here made by the vine-dresser : First, Of future fruitfulness ; *If it bear fruit, well.* Secondly, Of future incorrigibleness ; *If not, after that thou shalt cut it down.* 1. Here is a supposition of future fruitfulness ; *If it bear fruit, well ;* that is, it will be well

for the Master of the vineyard ; herein is he glorified, when his fig-trees bear much fruit : well for the dresser of the vineyard ; it rejoices the ministers of God to see their people bring forth fruit unto God : well for the vineyard, and the rest of the trees that are in it : but more especially well for the tree itself, thereby avoiding the punishment of barrenness, and procuring the reward of fruitfulness ; thus, *If it bear fruit, well.* Here is a supposition of future incorrigibility, *After that thou shalt cut it down :* that is, *After thou hast spared it, and I have pruned it ; after thy patience and my pains ; after thou hast forborne it, and I have manured it, digged, and dunged it ; if after all this, it bear no fruit, then I have not a word more to say, Thou shalt cut it down.* Thou mayest cut it down, nobody will go about to hinder thee. From hence learn, That a people's continued unfruitfulness under the means of grace, doth in time take off the prayers and intercessions of the ministers of God for them, and provokes God to bring his judgments unavoidably and irrevocably upon them : *After that thou shalt cut it down.*

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath : 11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. 12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13 And he laid his hands on her : and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work : in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. 15 The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite ! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering ?* 16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham,

whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day ? 17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed : and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Observe here, 1. The afflicted person, a woman which had a sore disease inflicted upon her by the devil for eighteen years, which almost bowed her together. There is nothing that the devil delights more in, than the miseries and calamities of mankind. Satan is not satisfied barely to infect the mind, and poison the souls of men ; but he delights to afflict and hurt the body, where and when he can obtain leave. Observe, 2. Christ's compassion towards her, and his miraculous healing of her ; *Jesus called her to him,* and with a word speaking healed her. Where note, That the inveterateness of the disease, and the instantaneousness of the cure, made the miracle evident. She that had been bowed down eighteen years, in an instant is made straight, and only by a word of Christ's mouth. Such a miraculous operation was an evident testimony of his divine mission, that he was the Son of God. Observe, 3. How the heart of the poor woman is affected with Christ's hand : she glorified God ; that is, she gave thanks to God, and attributed the miracle to him. As the chief end of all God's extraordinary works, either of power or mercy, is the exaltation of his own glory ; so the only way that we can set forth his glory, is by celebrating his praises, and expressing our own thankfulness : *He that offereth me praises and thanks, glorifies me,* Ps. l. ult. Observe, 4. The unreasonable anger and unjust indignation, which was found with the ruler of the synagogue against our holy Lord for working this miraculous cure on the sabbath-day. There is no person so holy, no action so innocent, but may fall under unjust censure, especially where malice and ignorance are combined. What a severe reflection doth this man make upon our blessed Lord for performing a work of mercy on the sabbath-day ! Observe, 5. Our Lord's vindication of himself from calumny and false accusation ; 1. He charges his accusers with hypocrisy. *Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you loose his ox or his ass from the stall on the sabbath-day, and*

water him? It is one note of an hypocrite, to condemn that in another which he doth himself: the Jews held it lawful to loose and lead a beast to watering on the sabbath-day, which was a work of servile labour; and yet would condemn Christ for healing a poor woman only with a word speaking. 2. Christ vindicates his own action, by comparing it with theirs, which they judged lawful on the sabbath-day: Was their loosing and watering the beast a work of necessity? much more was his. Was theirs a work of mercy? his much more. Their compassion was to a brute beast, his to a rational creature, to a woman, and that not a stranger, an heathen woman; but one of their own, a Jewish woman, a daughter of Abraham. Nay, farther, Christ's act was an act of far greater necessity, and more special mercy, than theirs. The beast might live a day without water; the beast might not be sick: but this woman was in sore distress, and had been so for eighteen years; nay, she was in the hands of the enemy of mankind, bound by Satan. Was it not then a greater act of mercy and compassion to loose her, than to lead a beast? Observe, 6. What effect our Lord's vindication of himself had upon the hearers of it: *His adversaries were ashamed, and the people rejoiced*, ver. 17. His accusers were ashamed, and probably convinced, perhaps silenced; but we read not that they confessed their error, or acknowledged their unjust censure, or craved Christ's pardon. When persons' judgments are under conviction of an error or mistake, it is very hard to bring themselves to confess and own their mistake, because all men stand very much upon the credit and reputation of their understandings, and look upon it as a reproach to own themselves mistaken; though it is really otherwise. But though our Saviour's adversaries were only ashamed, others rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? 19 It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. 20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? 21 It

is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Our Saviour's design in both these parables, is to keep his disciples and followers from being offended at the small beginnings of his kingdom, and to foretel the future great success of the gospel, notwithstanding the present small appearance of the efficacy of it. To this purpose he compares the kingdom of God, that is the gospel-church, to a grain of mustard seed, which being one of the least seeds, yet in that country grew into so large a tree, that the birds did roost and lodge in the boughs of it. He also likens it to leaven, which quickly diffuses itself through the whole mass and lump, instantly turning a great heap of meal into its own nature. Christ shows hereby of what a spreading nature the doctrine of the gospel would be, notwithstanding all the malice and opposition of wicked men. Learn hence, That how small beginnings soever the gospel had in its first plantation, yet by the fructifying blessing of God, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, it has had, and shall have, a wonderful increase.

22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Observe here, 1. The unwearied pains and diligence of our holy Lord in preaching and publishing the glad tidings of the gospel to lost sinners: *He went through the cities and villages teaching*; not in great and populous cities only, but in poor and obscure villages also; not preaching by his exemplary life only, but by his holy doctrine likewise. Let such preachers, who look upon the work of preaching as the least part of their business, consider the indefatigable pains which our Lord took in that work; and how will his diligence shame our negligence! Observe, 2. A curious question put to our Saviour concerning the number of those that should be saved, whether they should be few or many: *Lord, are there few that be saved?* Where note, How curiously inquisitive we naturally are after the knowledge

of things that do not concern us, how forward to pry into unrevealed secrets, and to search into God's hidden counsel; it concerns us rather to understand what sort of persons shall be saved, than how many shall be saved, and to make sure that we be of that sort. Observe, 3. Our Saviour gives no direct answer to the curiosity of this inquiry, but turns his speech from him to the people: *Jesus said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate, &c.* For the clear understanding of which expression we must know, that Christ alludes to the feasts and marriage suppers among the Jews: they that were invited did enter by a gate which was very strait and narrow; and as soon as the invited were once entered, the gate was shut, and opened no more. Here Christ bids them strive to enter into the kingdom of heaven, before the gate is shut against them, and their entrance, by means of their coming too late, be made impossible to them: *Strive to enter, &c. for many will seek, &c.* Where note, 1. The metaphor which Christ is pleased to set forth heaven, and the happiness of a future state, by; he compares it to a *strait gate*: to a *gate*, to denote the possibility of entering; to a *strait gate*, to denote the difficulty of entrance: a gate supposes the entrance possible, but a strait gate bespeaks the entrance difficult. 2. Here is a duty urged and enforced upon all those that expect the happiness of another life, and desire to enter in at this strait gate, and that is, a diligent and industrious striving: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* 3. We have a forcible argument and motive to excite and quicken us to the practice of this duty, drawn from the paucity, or small number, of those that shall obtain salvation in a dying hour: *Many will seek to enter in but shall not be able.* Learn thence, 1. That heaven or the happiness of a future state, is attainable. 2. That it is not attainable without labour and difficulty. 3. That all those difficulties may be happily overcome by a diligent and industrious striving.

25 When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26 Then shall ye begin to say, We

have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. 28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. 29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. 30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Our Saviour having exhorted all his followers, in the foregoing verses, to make sure of heaven and salvation to themselves, whilst the door of hope and salvation is open to them, by this parable of a master of a family inviting guests to his table, waiting for their coming, and at last shutting the door against them, because they either denied or delayed coming, Christ hereby represented to the Jews the great danger they were in, if they neglected the present season of grace and salvation, which now they did enjoy; telling them farther how little it would profit them at the day of judgment, to allege that they had eaten and drank in his presence, and that they had heard him preach in their streets, if they did not forsake their sins, and obey his gospel. Adding farther, that it would be an heart-piercing sorrow, a soul-rending grief to them at the great day, to see not only the patriarchs and prophets, and other Jews, but even the despised Gentiles from all quarters and nations, whom they thought accursed, admitted into the kingdom of heaven, and themselves eternally shut out: *For the last shall be first, and the first last*: that is, the Gentiles who were afar off shall receive the gospel, when you for rejecting it shall be cast off. From the whole note, 1. That there is a determined time when souls must (if ever) accept of the offers of grace and salvation, which are made unto them; now is the door open, and persons invited in. 2. That ere long Jesus Christ, who now stands at every one of our doors waiting for our compliance with his gospel-terms, will wait no longer



upon us, nor strive any further by the motions of his Spirit with us: *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door.* 3. That doleful is the condition of such miserable souls against whom the door is shut; the door of repentance, the door of hope, the door of salvation; all shut, eternally shut; and that by him who shutteth, and none can open. 4. That all would be saved at last; all will cry for mercy when it is too late, even such as now sinfully undervalue, and scornfully despise it: *Ye shall stand without and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* Note, 5. That it is no good plea for admittance into heaven, because we have been church-members here on earth: no outward privileges, though Christ has taught in our streets; no external acts of communion, though we have eaten and drank in his presence, and at his holy table; will justify our hopes of entering into heaven when we die, if we be workers of iniquity while we live: *Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence; but he shall say, I know ye not, ye workers of iniquity.* Note, 6. That as hell will be a second heaven to the glorified, so heaven will be a second hell to the damned. Hell will be a second heaven to the glorified, that is, it will add exceedingly to the happiness of the saints in heaven, to see and be sensible of that misery which they escaped, and the damned endure; and on the other hand, heaven will be a second hell to the damned, that is, it will increase their torments, and add to the vexation of their spirits, to see some in heaven whom they little expected to see there; some that never saw nor heard, nor enjoyed what they have done; strangers, yea, heathens taken in, when the children of the kingdom, that is, the members of the visible church, are shut out: *They shall come from the east, from the west, from the north, and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness.*

31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. 32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do curse to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall

be perfected. 33 Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

It may seem strange that the Pharisees, who had no kindness for our Saviour, should come here and acquaint him with a danger that he was in from Herod: *Get thee hence, for Herod will kill thee.* It is probable they had a design to drive him out of the country, because his reputation was so great amongst the people, who were admirers of his person, hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles. But what intention soever they had in acquainting Christ with his danger, it is very evident that our Saviour alighted it, by the message which he sent to Herod; *Go and tell that fox:* Where we must not suppose, that our Lord did fix this name of fox upon Herod as an opprobrious title, thereby reflecting the least dishonour upon him as a king; but it was as a prophet, to let him know, that being about his Father's work, he feared neither his power nor his policy; neither his cruelty nor his craft; and that nothing should take him off from finishing the work of man's redemption. Learn hence, That when God calls forth any of his servants to any special service for him, all the combined power and policy of the prince of darkness, and his instruments, shall never be able to hinder them, till they have finished their course, and done the service which God designed: *I must work to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following;* as if Christ had said, "Let Herod know that my time is not in his hand, and, as to this matter, I am not under his command or power; ere long my work will be finished, and then I shall be perfected." Observe here, That to impose this ignominious but agreeable name on Herod, is not contrary to the command, not to speak evil of the ruler of the people; it being the office of a prophet, not to spare kings when they reprove their offences. Accordingly Christ here uses his prophetic call and power, in giving this tyrant a name so suitable to his actions: *Go and tell that fox,* from me, a prophet sent of God, and therefore authorized so to style him, that I am hastening to Jerusalem to lay down my life there, not fearing to be killed by him in the way; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem,

where the Sanhedrim sit, who are to pass judgment upon me. *Dr. Whitby.*

34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! 35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Our Lord concludes this chapter with a compassionate lamentation over Jerusalem, the place where he was to suffer. His imprecation, or doubling of the word, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, shows the vehemency of his affection towards them, and the sincerity of his desires for their salvation. Observe, 1. The kindness and compassion of Christ to the Jews in general, and Jerusalem in particular, set forth by a lively metaphor and similitude, namely, that of a hen gathering her chickens under her wings. As the hen doth tenderly cherish, and carefully hide and cover her young from the eye of the destroyer; so would Christ have shrouded and sheltered this people from all those birds of prey, and particularly from the Roman eagle, by whose talons they were at last destroyed. Again, as the hen continueth her call to her young ones from morning to night, and holds out her wings for shelter to them all the day long, so did Christ wait for this people's repentance and conversion; for it was more than forty years after they had killed his prophets, and murdered himself, before they met with a final overthrow. Observe, 2. The amazing obstinacy and wilfulness of this people in rejecting the grace and favour, the kindness and condescension, of the Lord Jesus Christ: *I would have gathered you, but ye would not.* Observe, 3. The fatal issue of this obstinacy: *Behold your house is left unto you desolate*; is left, that is, certainly and suddenly will be left desolate (the present tense being put for the paulo post futurum) which denotes the certainty and proximity of this people's ruin. Learn, 1. That the ruin and destruction of sinners is wholly chargeable upon themselves, that is, on their own wilfulness and impenitency, on their own obstinacy and obduracy. *I*

*would have gathered you, says Christ, but ye would not.* Learn, 2. How deplorably and inexcusably they will perish, who perish by their own wilfulness and obduracy under the gospel. 3. That there is no desire like unto God's desire of a people's repentance, no longing like unto God's longing for a people's salvation: *O Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee! When shall it once be?* Jer. xviii. 27.

CHAP. XIV.

AND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him. 2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. 3 And Jesus answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? 4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; 5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day? 6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

Several particulars are here worthy of our observation and imitation. Note, 1. The freedom of our Lord's conversation with men: he delighted in human society, and was of a sociable temper; we do not find, that whenever he was invited to a dinner, he disdained to go, not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good. Note, 2. The house he goes into, and is entertained in, one of the chief Pharisees', who were some of his chiefest enemies; a great instance of our Lord's humanity, humility, and self-denial, in that he refused not the conversation of those whom he knew did not affect him; teaching us to love our enemies, and not to shun conversing with them, that thereby we may gain an opportunity of being reconciled to them. Note, 3. The day when our Saviour dined publicly at the Pharisee's house, among the lawyers and Pharisees; it was on the sabbath-day. Learn hence, That it is not simply unlawful for us to entertain our friends and neighbours with a plentiful meal on the Lord's day; it must

be acknowledged, that feasting upon any day is one of those lawful things which is difficultly managed without sin, but more especially upon that day, that it does not unfit us for the duties of the sabbath. However, our Lord's example in going to a public dinner amongst lawyers and Pharisees evidently shows the lawfulness of feasting on that day, provided we use the same moderation in eating and drinking that he did, and improve the opportunity as a season for doing good, as he has taught us by his example. Note, 4. How, contrary to all the laws of behaviour, the decency of conversation, and the rules of hospitality, the Pharisees watched him, making their table a snare to catch him, hoping they might hear something from him, or see something in him: for which they might accuse him: *He entered into the house of the Pharisee to eat bread, and they watched him.* Note, 5. Our Saviour chose the sabbath-day as the fittest season to work his miraculous cures in; in the Pharisee's house he heals a man who had the dropsy, on the sabbath-day. Christ would not forbear doing good, nor omit any opportunity of helping and healing the distressed though he knew his enemies the Pharisees would carp and cavil at it, calumniate and reproach him for it; to being the constant guise of hypocrites, to prefer ceremonial and ritual observations, before necessary and moral duties. Note, 6. How our Saviour defends the lawfulness of his act in healing the diseased man, from their own act in helping a beast out of the pit on the sabbath-day: as if Christ had said, "Is it lawful for you on the sabbath-day to help a beast? and is it sinful for me to heal a man?" Note, lastly, How the reason and force of our Saviour's argument silenced the Pharisees; convincing them, no doubt, but we read nothing of their conversion: the obstinate and malicious are much harder to be wrought upon than the ignorant and scandalous; it is easier to silence such men than to satisfy them; to stop their mouths than to remove their prejudices; for obstinacy will hold the conclusion, though reason cannot maintain the premises: *They could not answer him again to those things.*

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8 When thou art bidden of any man

to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

It was observed before, That our blessed Saviour dined publicly on the sabbath-day with several Pharisees and lawyers: that which is here worthy of our notice is this; How holy and suitable our Lord's discourse was to the solemnity of that day; may it be the matter of our imitation! It is not unlawful for friends to dine together on the Lord's day, provided their discourse be suitable to the day, such as our Lord's here; for observing how the company then at the table did affect precedence, and taking place one of another; he that before their eyes had cured a man of a bodily dropsy, attempts to cure the person that dined with him of the tympany of pride. Where note, That it is not the taking, but the affecting of the highest places and uppermost rooms, that our Saviour condemns. There may and ought to be a precedence amongst persons; it is according to the will of God, *that honour be given to whom honour is due*; and that the most honourable persons should sit in the most honourable places: for grace gives a man no exterior preference: it makes a man glorious indeed, but it is glorious within. Note farther, The way and course, the method and means, which our Saviour directs persons to, in order to their attaining real honour, both from God and men, namely, by being little in our own eyes, and in lowliness of mind, *esteeming others better than ourselves*; as God will abase, and men will despise, the proud and haughty, so God will exalt, and men will honour, the humble person: *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. 13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Observe here, that this is not an absolute denial of calling brethren and kinsfolk, and rich neighbours: but Christ forbids the bidding of them alone, and requires that the poor be refreshed at or from our table: for when the rich feast one another, and let the poor fast and pine; this is very sinful. Accordingly our Saviour, observing how the Pharisee that bade him to dinner invited only the rich, overlooking and neglecting the poor, he exhorts him and the company, that whenever they make entertainments for the time to come, they should not only invite their rich neighbours, and friends, who can and will invite them again; but remember the poor. Here note, 1. That civil courtesies, and hospitable entertainments of kindred and friends, for maintaining and preserving love and concord, is not only lawful, but an expedient and necessary duty; *Use hospitality one to another* (says St. Peter) *without grudging*. 2. That though it be not unlawful to invite and feast the rich, yet it is most acceptable to God when we feed and refresh the poor: *When thou makest a feast call rather the poor, and thou shalt be blessed*. We must prefer the duties of christian charity before the acts of common civility: blessed are those feast-makers, who make the bowels of the hungry to bless them. 3. That God oft-times rewards our liberality to the poor very signally in this life; but if it be deferred, we shall not fail to receive it at the resurrection of the just: *The poor cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just*.

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 16 Then said he unto him, A

certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. 22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

One of them that sat at meat with our Saviour in the Pharisee's house, hearing Christ speak of being recompensed at the resurrection of the just, repeated that known saying among the Rabbins, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*: that is, who shall be partaker of the joys of heaven. Hereupon Christ utters the parable of the marriage-supper, recorded here by St. Luke, with small variation from what was delivered by St. Matthew, chap. xxii. The first intention of our Saviour in that parable seems to be this, to set forth that gracious offer of mercy and salvation which was made by the preaching of the gospel unto the Jews, and to declare God's purpose of receiving the Gentiles into the fold of Christ, upon the Jews despising and rejecting that inestimable favour. But besides this, it has an aspect upon us christians, who have embraced the doctrine of the gospel. Here note, 1. That the gospel, for its freeness and fulness, for its

varieties and delicacies, is like a marriage supper: for, 1. It does create the same religion between Christ and believers, that marriage doth between husband and wife. 2. It entitles to the same privileges that a conjugal relation doth; to the same endearing love and tenderness, to the same care, protection, to the same honour, to the same happiness. 3. It obliges to the like duties, namely, unspotted love and fidelity, cheerful obedience to his commands, reverence to his person, submission to his authority. 4. It produceth the same effects; as the effect of marriage is increase of children, so the fruit of the gospel is *bringing many sons to God*. Note, 2. That gospel invitations are mightily diseasted; they made light of the invitation, and offered frivolous excuses for their refusal of it. Note, 3. That the preference which the world has in men's esteem, is a great cause of the gospel contempt; one had *purchased a piece of ground*, another had *bought five yoke of oxen*. Note, 4. The deplorable sadness of their condition who refuse, upon any pretence whatever, to comply with the gospel-tender of reconciliation and mercy: *The king was wroth*, pronounced them *unworthy of his favour*, and resolved they should not taste of his supper; but sends forth his servants to invite others to his supper. Note, 5. The notion under which the Gentiles are set forth unto us, such as were in *lanes, streets, and highways*; that is, a rude, rustic, and barbarous people, whom the Jews despised, yea, whom they held accursed; yet even these are called and accepted, whilst the Jews, the first-intended guests, are excluded by means of their own contempt. Note, lastly, The means used to bring in the Gentiles to the gospel-supper: *Go and compel them to come in*; not by violence, but persuasion; by argumentation, not compulsion: the plain and persuasive, the powerful and efficacious preaching of the word, with the motions and influences of the Holy Spirit, are the compulsions here intended; not external force, not temporal punishment, nor outward violence. *Non religionis est cogere religionem*, says Tertullian; 'No man ought by force and violence to be compelled to the profession of the true faith.' Observe here, How vainly these words are brought to prove, that men may be compelled by the secular arm to embrace the christian faith. This appears, 1. From the nature of a banquet, to which none are compelled by force, but

by persuasion only. 2. From the scope of the parable, which respects the calling of the Gentiles, who believed by the great power of God.

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned and said unto them, 26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Our Saviour by these expressions doth not condemn natural love and affection, either to our relations, or our own lives, but only regulates and directs it; showing, That our first and chief love ought to be bestowed upon himself; we may have, and ought to cherish, tender and relenting affections towards our near and dear relations, but then the consideration of Christ's truth and religion must take place of these; yea, of life itself; and when they stand in competition with these, we are to regard them no more than if they were objects of our hatred. Learn hence, 1. That no man can be a sincere disciple of Christ, who gives any relation, or outward enjoyment, a preference to Christ in his heart and affections. Christ must be loved above all, or we love him not at all; less love he accounts and calls *hatred*. That which we can leave for Christ, we hate in comparison of that love which we bear to Christ. It is both impious and impossible to hate father and mother, and, ourselves, absolutely: it must then be understood comparatively only; what we love less, we are comparatively said to hate. Learn, 2. That all the disciples of Christ must be ready and willing, whenever called to it, to quit all their temporal interests and enjoyments, even life itself, and submit to any temporal inconveniences, even death itself, all this willingly and cheerfully, rather than disown their relation to Christ, and quit the profession of his holy religion; upon easier terms than these can none of us be the disciples of Jesus.

28 For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the founda-

tion, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand. 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Our blessed Saviour, by these two parables, advises all his followers to sit down and consider, to weigh well, and cast up beforehand, what it is like to cost them to go through with their profession of religion : this, he tells us, common prudence will direct men to do in other cases ; particularly when they either go to build or fight ; as a man that intends to build, will consult whether he is able to defray the charges ; and a king that goeth forth to war, will consider what strength he has to make opposition : in like manner should persons engage in religion : not rashly, but advisedly, with consideration and judgment. It is good to remember the issues of action, before we act ; before we engage in the spiritual combat, to consider the difficulty of the battle ; what proud leviathans we have to conflict with, what mighty giants to contend and strive against, even the world, the flesh, and the devil. But then we must take great care that our deliberation and consideration of difficulties and dangers may not deter us from, but work in us, a steady resolution for the combat, looking up to Christ for his auxiliary aid and strength to render us victorious, who though of ourselves we can do nothing, yet may do all things through Christ that strengthens us. Learn from hence, That such as take up a profession of christianity, without considering the dangers and difficulties, the trials and troubles, the afflictions and temptations, which may accompany it, will never hold out in the spiritual warfare, but either fall in it, or run from it.

34 Salt is good : but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned ? 35 It is neither fit

for the land, nor yet for the dunghill ; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Our Saviour here compares his disciples to salt, thereby denoting their usefulness, salt being one of the most useful things in nature ; and pointing out also their duty, which is to season themselves and others with sound doctrine. But hypocritical professors are like unsavoury salt ; they are neither savoury in themselves nor serviceable to others. Our Saviour compares such christians who have no savour of piety and goodness upon their spirits, to salt, that, having lost its goodness, is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill : that is, being of a brackish nature, it is wholly unfit to manure the ground, and will rather occasion barrenness than any fruitfulness or increase. Learn hence, That sincere and serious christians are and will be as the salt of the earth ; that is, good and savoury in themselves, and endeavouring by exhortation and good example to season others ; but hypocritical professors and apostatizing christians will be cast out, and trampled upon as unsavoury salt.

#### CHAP. XV.

This chapter consists of three parables ; the design and scope of them all is this ; to represent the great tenderness and compassion of God Almighty towards the vilest and worst of sinners upon their sincere repentance, and how highly pleasing it is to God when they do so. This is expressed by three parables. 1. Of a man seeking diligently a sheep that he had lost, and having found it rejoiced greatly, and invited his neighbours to partake of his joy. 2. Of a woman having lost a piece of silver, and seeking carefully till she had found it, and then in like manner rejoicing with her friends for her good success. 3. Of a prodigal son, who, having spent his time and consumed his estate in riot and excess, at length returns to his father's house, and is joyfully received.

**T**HEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners, for to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

The publicans and sinners, as they had done several times before, came to hear our Saviour's instructions ; he treated them very kindly, and conversed familiarly with them ; at this the Pharisees were displeased and murmured, censured our Saviour for too much familiarity with those men, whom they looked upon as scandalous to converse with ; not considering that he conversed with them as their physician, not as their

companion ; and therefore his proper work and employment lay among his patients : and that he might give all possible encouragement to the repentance of the greatest sinners, he sets forth at once the tender care of God in recovering such lost sinners, and the inexpressible joy that is found in heaven at the welcome news of their recovery ; for thus it follows in the parables.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it ? 5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me ; for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

In this parable Christ compares sinners to sheep going astray, and God the Father to a tender and careful shepherd seeking his stray sheep ; wherein he secretly taxes the Pharisees for their uncharitableness in censuring him for conversing with publicans and sinners, and for their envy at the recovery of such sinners by repentance ; assuring them, that they are far from the temper of the holy angels, who rejoice more at the news of one notorious sinner's conversion, than for many righteous persons who went not astray ; like as a father is touched with a more sensible joy for the recovery of one son who was dangerously sick, than for the health of all the rest who were in no such danger. From the whole note, 1. That the creature's aberration may serve for our instruction ; the sheep's straying away from us, should put us in mind of our wandering away from God. 2. That Christ the great Shepherd of his church, with vigilance and care, seeketh up and findeth out his lost sheep, and will never give over his search till he hath found them. 3. That the recovery of one lost sinner by repentance, is matter of exceeding joy and rejoicing to Christ the great Shepherd, and to all the blessed company of heaven : *There is*

*joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*, or changeth the whole course of his life, *more than over ninety and nine just persons* that need no such repentance. The opening of a sinner's heart to Christ, makes joy in heaven, and occasions triumph in the city of our God above ; as when a young prince is born, all the kingdom rejoiceth, and the conduits run wine ; so when a soul is born to Christ under the gospel, O what a mighty satisfaction is it to the heart of Christ, and to all the angels and saints, that another soul is espoused to him. "O sinner, Christ never rejoiced over thee before ; thou hast grieved him, and wounded him a thousand times, but he never rejoiced in thee till now." And if there be such joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, Lord, what rejoicing must there be at the glorification of saints.

8 Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it ? 9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me ; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10 Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

The scope of this parable is the same with the former. 1. To express the joy that is found with God and his holy angels, at the recovery and conversion of a notorious sinner. 2. To justify Christ in conversing with such sinners in order to their repentance and conversion, from the malicious reflections of the Pharisees made upon our Saviour for so doing : the sense of the words seems to be this, "If you do all justify the diligence and care of a woman, using all possible means to recover the loss of a piece of silver that has Cesar's image upon it, why (might our Saviour say) will you Pharisees censure and condemn me for seeking to recover and save lost sinners, that have the image of an holy God instamped upon them ?" Learn hence, 1. That the conversion of a sinner from a course and state of sin and wickedness, is highly acceptable and pleasing unto God. 2. That it is reasonable to suppose, that the holy angels in heaven do conceive a new

joy at the notice and news of a sinner's repentance and conversion unto God : how the angels come by this knowledge, whether by virtue of their ministry here below, or whether God is pleased to reveal it to them above, as a thing extremely welcome and delightful to good spirits, 'tis neither material to enquire, nor possible to determine. But their happiness not being intensively infinite, it is certain that they may be happier than they are. Note, 3. That God is not only willing to receive and embrace repenting and returning sinners, but the news of their repentance is entertained with so much joy in heaven, that if it be possible for the blessed inhabitants of that place to have any thing added to their happiness, this will be a new accession to it : for though the happiness of God himself be intensively infinite, and can have nothing added to it ; yet the happiness of angels and glorified spirits being but finite, is capable of addition ; and as their knowledge and love do increase, so their felicity may be growing and improving to all eternity ; so that it is reasonable enough to suppose that there is really joy among the angels and spirits of just men made perfect, over every sinner that repenteth.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons : 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land ; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! 18 I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned

against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But, when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat and be merry : 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

In the two former parables of the lost sheep and lost groat, was represented to us the great pains and care which Christ takes for the recovery of lost sinners. In this third parable of the prodigal son, is shadowed forth unto us, with what great readiness, joy, and gladness, our heavenly Father receives repenting and returning sinners. In the face of this prodigal, as in a glass, we may behold, first, A riotous sinner's aversion from God. Secondly, A penitent sinner's conversion to God. Thirdly, A pardoned sinner's acceptance and entertainment with God. From the whole learn, 1. What is the nature of sin, and the practice of sinners. Sin is a departing from God, and every sinner doth voluntarily and of his own accord depart from him : *He took his journey into a far country.* Learn, 2. The great extravagancy which sinners run into when they forsake God, and give up themselves to the conduct of their lusts and vile affections ; he wasted all his substance *with riotous living* ; that is, spent his time, and consumed his treasure, in riot and excess. Observe, 3. That sin will certainly bring men into straits, but straits do not always bring men off from sin : he began to be in want, yet thinks not of returning to his father's house. 4. That sinners will try all ways, and go through the greatest hardships and difficulties, before they will leave their sins, and return home to their heavenly Father :



*He joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and went into the fields to feed swine.* He chooses rather to feed at the hog's trough, than to feast in his father's house. Observe, 5. At last the happy fruits of a sanctified affliction ; they put the prodigal upon serious consideration : *He came to himself ; upon wise consultation ; I perish with hunger ; and upon a fixed resolution ; I will arise and go to my father.* Serious consideration, and solid resolutions, are great steps to a sound conversion, and thorough reformation. Observe, 6. The affectionate tenderness and compassion of the father towards the returning prodigal : though he had deserved to be sharply reprov'd, severely corrected, and finally rejected and shut out of doors ; yet the father's compassion is above his anger : not a word of his miscarriages drops from his father's mouth, but as soon as ever the son looks back, mercy looks out, and the father expresses, 1. His speedy readiness to receive his son, *He ran unto him :* the son did only arise and go, but the father made haste and ran ; mercy has not only a quick eye to spy out a penitent, but a swift foot, it runs to embrace a penitent. 2. Wonderful tenderness, *He fell upon his neck :* it had been much to have looked upon him with the eye, more to have taken him by the hand, but most of all to fall upon his neck. Divine mercy will not only meet a penitent, but embrace him also. 3. Strong affectionateness : *He kissed him ;* giving him thereby a pledge and assurance of perfect friendship and reconciliation with him. Learn hence, That God is not only ready to give demonstrations of his mercy to penitent sinners, but also to give the seals and tokens of his special reconciled favour to them ; they shall now have the kisses of his lips, who formerly deserved the blows of his hand : *The father ran unto him, fell on his neck, and kissed him.* Observe lastly, The great joy that appeared in the whole house, as well as in the father's heart, upon this great occasion, the prodigal son's returning : *They all began to be merry,* there was music and dancing. Learn hence, That sincere conversion brings the soul into a joyful, into a very joyful state and condition. The joy that conversion brings is an holy and spiritual joy, a solid and substantial joy, a wonderful and transcendent joy, an increasing and never-fading joy. Our joy on earth is an earnest of the joys of heaven, where there will be rejoicing in the presence

of our heavenly Father and his holy angels to all eternity : *because we were dead, but are now alive again ; we were lost, but are found.*

25 Now his elder son was in the field : and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing : 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come ; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in : therefore came his father out, and entreated him. 29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment : and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.

By the murmuring of the elder son at the prodigal's returning to, and reception with, his father, some think the Jews in general are to be understood, whose peevishness to the Gentiles, and the repining at the offer of salvation made unto them by the gospel, is very evident from many places of scripture : others understand it of the scribes and Pharisees in particular, who presuming on their own righteousness, as if they had never transgressed God's commandments at any time, murmured at our Saviour for conversing with sinners, though it were in order to the bringing of them to repentance ; which instead of being frowardly discontented at, they ought to have rejoiced at. Learn hence, There is such an envious spirit in men, yea, even in the best of men, as inclineth them to repine at such dispensations of divine grace and favour, as others receive, and they want. 2. That to in-

dodge such a spirit and temper in ourselves, argues great sin, and great folly: great sin in being dissatisfied with God's dispensations, and affronting his wisdom and justice; and great folly, in making another's good our grief; as if we had less, because another has more: *The eldest son was angry, and would not go in*: it follows, *therefore came his father out and intreated him*. This shows the meekness of God in dealing with us under our frowardness; and the high-satisfaction he takes in a sinner's conversion and returning to his duty. Lastly, This points out unto us our duty to imitate God, and be followers of him as dear children. Doth he rejoice at a sinner's return to his duty? so should we. 'Tis the devil's temper to regret and envy the good and happiness of others; he gnashes his teeth, when the prey he thought himself sure of, is snatched out of his jaws. But to God, and all his holy angels, nothing is so agreeable as the repentance and conversion of a sinner from the error of his ways, and the saving of a soul from death; this is looked upon as a resurrection from the dead, and a ground of the greatest joy and rejoicing: *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found*. Whence note, That regeneration is the term from which all true pleasure commences. We never live a merry day till we begin to live unto God; when the prodigal son returned to his father, then, and not till then, they began to be merry.

CHAP. XVI.

**A**ND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2 And he called him, and he said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do, for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4 I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him,

and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

Our Lord begins this chapter with the parable of a rich man's steward, who being called upon by his master to give up his accounts, in order to his being discharged from his office, casts about with himself what course he had best take to provide for his subsistence, when he should be turned out of his employment: at last he resolves upon this course; That he will go to his lord's debtors, and take a favourable account of them, writing down fifty for an hundred, that by this means he might oblige them to be kind to him in his necessity; this is the sum of the parable. Now the scope and design of it is this: To exhort all men that are intrusted, by God here with estates, honours, and authority, to make use of all these unto spiritual ends, the glory of God, and the benefit of others; for we are not proprietors and owners, but stewards only, of the manifold gifts of God, and must be accountable unto him for all at last; but in the mean time to use, employ, and improve our Lord's goods to the best advantage for ourselves, whilst we are entrusted with them; this is the scope of the parable. Now the observations from it are these: 1. That all persons, even the highest and greatest of persons, are but stewards of the good things of God. 2. That our stewardship must and shall have an end; we shall not be always, nay, we shall not be long, stewards. 3. That when we are put out of our stewardship, we must give an account of our carriage therein; and the greater our trust was, the heavier will our reckoning be. 4. That therefore it will be our highest prudence, whilst we are entrusted with our master's goods, so to use and improve them, as may make most for our comfort and advantage, when we give up our account.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

*Wisely*, that is, discreetly, according to the wisdom of the men of this world, whose concern is only for the good things of this life. Christ commends him not absolutely, as a fit example to be followed in wasting his master's goods, but comparatively, as being worthy to be so far imitated by the children of light, as to take the same care to secure heaven as others do to get the world. Christ commends him no farther than we do a person, when we say, such a one is a shrewd man for the world: In a word, the steward is here commended, not for his dishonesty, but for his policy, shrewdness, and sagacity, having done cunningly for himself, though knavishly for his master; from whence our Saviour draws this conclusion, *That the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*. Hence note, That the generality of men are not so wise and provident for the soul, and the concerns of another world, as worldly men are for the interests and concerns of this life. It is seldom seen, that good men are so wise for the concerns of their souls, as worldly men are for their worldly interests.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Here our Saviour makes application of the foregoing parable to his disciples. Where note, 1. The title given by our Saviour to wealth and riches, he calls it *Mammon*, and *Mammon of unrighteousness*; *Mammon* was the name given by the heathens to the god of riches; the mammon of unrighteousness, is riches unrighteously gotten. 2. The advice given by our Saviour to the men of wealth: *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*; that is, make God your Friend by a charitable distribution, that he may bless you; make the poor your friends, that they may unitedly engage their prayers for you; make your own consciences your friends, that they may not reproach and shame you, sting and torment you. Observe, 3. The argument used to excite the rich to this improvement of their wealth: *That when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations*: *When ye fail*, that is, when ye die, and your riches fail you, and can stand you in no farther stead, *They*

*may receive you*; What *they*? Some understand it of the Holy Trinity, others of the blessed angels, whose office it is to convey the charitable and good man's soul to heaven, its eternal habitation. Some understand it of riches themselves. *They may receive you*; that is, your estates, laid out for God in works of piety and charity, may enter before you into heaven, and open the gates of eternal life for you, not in a way of merit, but in a way of means. Lastly, *They may receive you*: Some understand it of the poor themselves, whose bowels our charity hath refreshed, that they will welcome us to heaven, and receive us with joyful acclamations into the eternal mansions, which are prepared for the merciful. Others say, the words, *They may receive you*, are impersonally put for, that you may be received into heaven when you die. This is to imitate the wise merchant, in sending over our money into another country by bills of exchange.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. 11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

Our blessed Saviour having declared to his followers, in the foregoing verses, the great advantage they shall reap by a charitable distribution of temporal good things, he acquaints them in these verses with the great detriment and disadvantage that will redound to them if they do otherwise. 1. If they be not faithful in rightly employing temporal riches, they must not expect that God will entrust them with spiritual and heavenly, which are the true riches: God will deal with his servants, as we deal with ours, never trust them with much, whom we find unfaithful in a little. 2. If they be not faithful in the improvement of these outward things, which God entrusts them with but for a time, and must shortly leave them to others; how can they expect, that God should give them those spiritual good things, which shall never be taken away from them to whom they are given. Where note, 1. That the riches we

have are called not our own, but another man's: *If we have not been faithful in that which is another man's*; Because God hath not made us proprietors, but dispensers; not owners, but stewards of these things; we have them for others, and must leave them to others; we are only trustees for the poor; if much be put into our hands, it is to dispense to others according to our Master's orders; let us be faithful then in that which is another man's; that is, with what God puts into our hand for the benefit of others. Note, 2. That though our gifts are not our own; yet grace or spiritual goods are our own: others may have all the benefit of our gifts, but we shall have the benefit and comfort of our own grace; this treasure we cannot leave to others, and it shall never be taken away from ourselves. Note, 3. That God is just, and will be eternally justified in denying his special grace to those, who do not make use of his common gifts: Would men be faithful in improving a little, God would entrust them with more; did they not abuse the trust of his common gifts, he would not deny them the treasure of his saving grace, called here, *The true riches*.

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Observe here, A two-fold master spoken of, God and the world. God is our Master by creation, preservation, and redemption; he has appointed us our work, and secured us our wages: the world is become our master by intrusion, usurpation, and general estimation; too many esteeming as their chief good, and delighting in it as their chief joy. Observe, 2. That no man can serve these two masters, who are of contrary interests, and issue out contrary commands: When two masters are subordinate, and in their commands subservient to each other, the difficulty of serving both is not great; but where commands interfere, and interests clash, it is impossible: no man can serve God and the world, but he may serve God with the world; we may be served of riches, and yet serve God; but we cannot serve riches, but we must disserve God; we cannot serve God and the world both, and seek them as our chief good and ultimate end, because no man

can divide his heart betwixt God and the world. Learn hence, That to love the world as our chief good, to seek it as our highest interest, and to serve it as our chief commander, cannot stand with the love and service which we bear and owe to God our Maker. The world's slaves, while such, can be none of God's freemen.

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

The Pharisees were notoriously addicted to the sin of covetousness, accounting no man happy but them that were rich; and because the promises made to the Jews were generally (though not only) of temporal blessings, they looked upon poverty as a curse, and esteemed the poor accursed, *John vii. 49*. The Pharisees hearing their covetousness reproved, and the doctrine of charity and alms preached and enforced by our Saviour, they derided him in the shamefullest manner, with the highest degree of contempt and scorn, wringing the nose, and making mouths at him, as the original word seems to import. Learn hence, 1. That sinners grow very angry and impatient under the ministry of the word, when they hear their darling sin, their beloved lust, struck at, and sharply reproved. 2. That covetous men who make wealth their idol, when they hear the doctrine of an holy contempt of the world preached, and the great duty of alms-giving urged and enforced, they make it the matter of their contempt and derision: *The Pharisees heard and derided him*.

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Here our Saviour sharply reproves the Pharisees for their horrible pride, their self-justification, and vain affectation of the opinion and esteem of others; as if Christ had said, "You bear up yourselves, and take a pride in this, that men know no ill by you, that no man can say, Black is your eye; but God can see that black is your heart. You think that because you glory in your own excellences, God glories in you too; but whoever is highly esteemed by you, is abominated by God."

Learn, That no man ought to think himself approved of God barely because he is approved by himself; for all who justify themselves upon the goodness of their works are not good.

16 The law and the prophets were until John : since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. 17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. 18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marieth another, committeth adultery : and whosoever marieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery.

Our Saviour in these words gives the Pharisees to understand that their contempt of his person and doctrine was the more inexcusable, because they lived in and under the clearest light of the gospel : the preaching of the law and the prophets continued but till John the Baptist came among you ; since which time the gospel has been clearly preached both by him and myself unto you ; and it hath pleased God to give my doctrine great acceptance in the world. Though you Pharisees reject it ; yet every one, that is, very many, press into it ; so that the doctrine which you mock, the holy doctrine of the gospel, others will embrace. Yet lest, while Christ spake thus highly of the gospel, the Pharisees should reproach him as a destroyer of the law, he shows that the obligation of the moral law was of eternal force, and that heaven and earth should sooner pass, than the obligation of the law cease ; which yet the Pharisees most shamefully violated, particularly the seventh commandment, which they brake by permitting and practising divorces, upon unjustifiable grounds. Learn hence, That the moral law, in all the branches of it, which is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, is an eternal rule of life and manners, which is to stand in force as long as the world stands, and the frame of heaven and earth endures.

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day : 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the

crumbs which fell from the rich man's table : moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

Our Saviour in his parabolical history of Dives and Lazarus, instructs us concerning the right use of riches, which is to capacitate us to do good to others ; declaring that in the life to come, the pious poor man shall be eternally happy, whilst the unmerciful rich man shall be intolerably miserable. Here observe, 1. The different state and condition of good and bad men in the other world, from what they are in this ; here the wicked prosper, grow rich and great, and the good and virtuous are in calamity, suffer poverty and distress, which has staggered many men, yea, the best of men, in the belief of a divine providence. Observe, 2. That our Saviour did not censure the rich men for being rich, but for being sensual ; not for wearing costly apparel, and keeping a plentiful table, (which, if managed according to men's qualities and estates, is a commendable virtue,) but his sensuality and luxury, and forgetting to feed the hungry with the superfluities of his table ; these are the things for which he is censured. From whence we may learn, that pride and luxury, intemperance and sensuality, are such abuses of worldly riches, as worldly men are very prone and incident to. Rich men too often make their back and their belly their god ; sacrificing and devoting all they have to the service of those idols. Observe, 3. That a poor and mean condition is the lot of many good men, nay, perhaps of the most in this world. That a man may be poor and miserable in this world, and yet be very dear to God : the grace of sanctification is sometimes bestowed most eminently, where the gifts of providence have been dispensed most sparingly ; consequently from the present state of men in this world, we can make no judgment of their future condition in the world to come.

22 And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried ; 23 And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom :

Observe here, 1. That our Saviour represents all men, both good and bad, pass-

ing immediately out of this life into a state of happiness or misery; Lazarus died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Thence note, 1. That the souls of men survive in sensibility and activity, after the dissolution of their bodies, and do not sleep with the body till the day of the resurrection. 2. That all holy souls, and amongst the rest the godly poor, are instantly, after death, conveyed by angels to their place of rest and blessedness. *The rich man also died*: this is added to let us know that riches, for all men's confidence in them, will not deliver from death; the rich man might be surfeited by faring deliciously every day, while Lazarus was famished. *And was buried*: here is no mention of Lazarus's burial, probably he had none, but was flung out of the way into some hole or pit; or if he had a burial, a very mean one, which is past over in silence: all the advantage which a rich man has by a great estate after he is dead, is only to have a pompous funeral, which yet signifies nothing to him, because he is not sensible of it. *And in hell he lift up his eyes, &c.* He feels at once both his own misery, and sensibly perceives Lazarus's happiness. Thence note, That the souls of wicked men, whilst their bodies lie in the grave, are in the state of the greatest misery, which is aggravated by the sense they have at the same time of the saints' happiness. For probably the blessed shall see the torments of the damned, and the damned probably shall see the glory of the blessed.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Observe here, 1. The place where the rich man suffers, it is in hell: the souls of wicked men, when they leave their bodies, do certainly go into a place of torment, which is not only beyond expression, but our apprehension also; *Eyc hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, those dreadful things which God hath prepared for them that hate him.* Observe, 2. The sin for which he suffers: it is the sin of unmercifulness. Thence learn, That uncharitableness and unmercifulness to the poor, is a very great sin, and such a sin as

alone, and without any other guilt, is sufficient to ruin a man for ever; there is found in this sin great impiety towards God, and great inhumanity towards our own nature. Observe, 3. The nature and quality of his sufferings: they are exquisitely painful, and void of the least degree of comfort; not a drop of water is granted to cool an inflamed tongue. Learn thence, That the least refreshments are impatiently desired by the damned souls in hell, but righteously denied and withheld from them: a drop of water was desired, but not granted. No cup of water, no bowls of wine, in hell: there is but one full cup in hell, and that is the cup of God's wrath, without any mixture of mercy or pity. That throat will be for ever parched with thirst then, which is drenched and drowned with excess now: the songs of the drunkard here, will be turned into howlings and lamentations there.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

Observe, 1. The title given to the rich man by father Abraham, *Son*. He doth not revile him, though a very bad man: if we revile the good, we are unjust, they deserve it not; if we revile the bad, we are unwise, we shall get nothing by it: a wise man knows not what it is to give bad language. Observe, 2. The admonition given, *Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things*: thy good things in which thou placedst all thy happiness; thy good things which thou lookedst upon thyself as the proprietor, and not as the dispenser of; now remember what thou hadst, and what thou abusest. Learn hence, That the outward blessings which are afforded to wicked men on earth, will be sadly remembered in hell: *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things.* 2. That no man ought to measure his happiness hereafter by his temporal felicity here: we may receive our good things here, and yet be tormented hereafter. 3. That no man ought to be excessively troubled if he meets with hardship here, because those for whom God designs good things hereafter, may have their evil things here: *Son, thou hadst thy good things, and also Lazarus evil things.*

4. The word (*remember*) implies that human souls, in their state of separation, do exercise memory, thought, and reflection on the past occurrences and actions of their lives; and, consequently, that they do not sleep or fall into a state of insensibility and inactivity at death till the resurrection.

26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that *would come* from thence.

The meaning is, That there neither is, nor can be, any commerce or intercourse betwixt glorified saints and damned sinners; but the state of souls at death is unalterably fixed and stated. Learn, That the miserable condition of damned souls in the next world, and the blessed condition of glorified souls, is unchangeably and unalterably such: the power of God is irresistible, and the will of God is invariable, the oath of God is immutable; *I have sworn that they shall never enter into my rest.*

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Here the rich man is represented as retaining even in hell some tenderness for his relations on earth; yet others think, that the kindness intended, was rather to himself than to his relations; fearing that their sinning by his example should be an aggravation of his own torments. Note thence, That the presence of sinful relations and companions in hell, may be supposed to make a considerable addition to the miseries of the damned: the sight of those whom they have sinned with, is a fresh revival of their own guilt; all the circumstances of their past and profligate lives are upon this occasion continually in their remembrance. Note farther, This miserable wretch is convinced that he could not get out of hell, therefore desires that no friend of his might come in. He knew well enough, that if they were once there, they would come out no more. Indeed, God will at the great day send forth his writ to the graves to bring out the bodies of the wicked that are shut up there; and will send out his writ to hell, to bring forth the spirits that

are shut in there; but it is in order to this, that both soul and body together may receive an eternal sentence for an everlasting imprisonment with the devil and his angels, and there will be no more opening for ever.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

That is, they have the inspired writings of Moses and the prophets, which sufficiently declare the mind and will of God to mankind, and therefore it is unreasonable to expect any farther revelation. Learn thence, That a standing revelation of God is evidence sufficient for divine things; it is a more certain way of conveyance, and more secured from imposture. Secondly, That there is a sufficient evidence that Moses and the prophets, or the writings of the holy scriptures, are of divine authority, and therefore to be read and heard, to be believed and assented to: *They have Moses, &c.*

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent.

As if he had said, they have always had Moses and the prophets in their hands, but yet their hearts remain impenitent; but if a special messenger be sent to them from the dead, this will not fail to awaken them, and bring them to repentance. Learn hence, How prone we are to dislike God's method and means which he has appointed for reclaiming us from our sins, and imagine some methods of our own would be more successful. The scriptures read, the word preached, the sacraments administered; these are the ordinary means which the wisdom of God has appointed for men's conviction; and if we think a messenger from the dead would be a more conducive means, the next verse will confute us, and thoroughly satisfy us, that whom the scripture convinces not, probably nothing will; for thus it follows:

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

A very awakening text this is, which speaks dreadfully to persons sitting all their days under the ministry of the gospel, and yet find not their understandings enlightened, their judgments convinced, their wills

subdued, and their lives reformed by it. Were it possible for such persons to see one come from the dead, yea, from the damned, with the flames of hell about his ears, wringing his hands, and gnashing his teeth, bewailing his misery, and beseeching them to take warning by his example, and in time to acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace; all this would have no farther effect upon them, than to move their passions a little for the present, whilst the dreadful sound is in their ears: the ordinances of God and not his providences, are the instituted and appointed means for men's conversion and salvation. Note then, 1. That no visions or apparitions, no new revelations concerning eternal rewards and punishments, are to be expected from the other world, in order to men's conversion and salvation. Note, 2. That the word of God dispensed to us, and the ordinary means of grace enjoyed by us, are more conducive and effectual means to persuade men to repentance, than if one should arise from the dead, and preach unto us. A messenger from the dead cannot bring with him either a more necessary doctrine, or a more certain and infallible doctrine, nor bring with him better arguments for our conviction, than what the scriptures do propound for our consideration; nor can we expect a greater co-operation of the Holy Spirit, or a greater concurrence of divine power, to render a message from the dead more effectual, than doth ordinarily attend the ministry of the word. Henceforward then, let us not wonder, if when a drunkard drops down dead upon the spot, the companions say one to another, *Drink on*; if sinners daily tumble one another into the grave, without considering the operation of God's hand; this, to those that consider this text, will not seem strange; *For if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be converted*, though hundreds of sinners before their eyes drop down dead: nay, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

## CHAP. XVII.

**T**HEN said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! 2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into

the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

Two things are here observable, 1. The necessity of scandalous offences: *It must needs be that offences come*, if we consider men's corruptions, Satan's malice, God's permission and just judgment. Observe, 2. The misery and mischief which come by these scandals: *Woe unto the world because of offences*; woe to such as give the scandal: this is *væ indignantis*, the woe of one denouncing; and woe to such as stumble at offences given; this is *væ dolentis*, the woe of one lamenting. From the whole, note, 1. That scandals or offensive actions in the church of Christ will certainly happen, and frequently fall out among those that profess religion and the name of Christ: *It is impossible but that offences will come*. Secondly, That scandalous and offensive actions from such as profess religion and the name of Christ, are baneful and fatal stumbling-blocks to wicked and worldly men. Thirdly, That the offences which wicked men take at the falls of the professors of religion, for the hardening of themselves in their wicked and sinful practices, is matter of just and great lamentation: *Woe unto the world because of offences*, Matt. xviii. 7.

3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

The doctrine of forgiving an offending brother, is pressed upon us with many forcible arguments in the New Testament, which speaks it to be a duty of indispensable necessity. This place is to be understood of private offences, and personal wrongs and injuries done by one man to another; which we must first prove, and then remit; and although it be said, *If he repent, forgive him*; that is not to be understood, as if we needed not to pardon our brother, if he neglects to repent and ask forgiveness; but whether he acknowledges his offence or not to us, our hearts must stand ready to forgive the wrong done to us, and to pray for forgiveness on his behalf at the hands of God; laying aside all thoughts and desires of revenge in our own cause, and standing ready to any office of love and



service to our offending brother. Learn hence, 1. That to fall often into the same offence against our brother is a great aggravation of our offences: *If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day*; that is, very often. 2. That as the multiplication of offences is a great aggravation of offences, so the multiplying of forgiveness is a great demonstration of a God-like temper in us: be that multiplieth sin, doth, like Satan, sin abundantly; and he that multiplieth pardon, doth, like God, pardon abundantly.

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

Observe here, 1. The supplicants, *the apostles*. 2. The person supplicated, *the Lord*. 3. The supplication itself, *Increase our faith*. 4. The occasion of this supplication, our Saviour urging the duty of forgiving injuries. Learn, 1. That as all graces in general, so the grace of faith in particular, is weak and imperfect in the best of saints. 2. That the most eminent saints (apostles not excepted) are very sensible of the imperfection of their faith, and very importunate with God daily for the increase of it: *Lord, increase our faith*. 3. That faith strengthened enables the soul to the most difficult duties of obedience, and particularly helps to the practice of that hard duty of forgiving injuries. When our Saviour had preached the doctrine and duty of forgiveness, the apostles instantly pray, *Lord, increase our faith*.

6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Here our Saviour tells his disciples, that if they have the smallest degree of true faith, lively, operative faith, it will enable them to perform this difficult duty of forgiving injuries, and all other duties, with as much facility and ease as a miraculous faith would enable them to remove mountains and transplant trees. Learn, That there is nothing which may tend to the glory of God, or to our own good and comfort, but may be obtained of God by a firm exercise of faith in him: *All things are possible to him that believeth*.

7 But which of you, having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle,

will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.

The design and scope of this parable is to show, that Almighty God neither is nor can be a Debtor to any of his creatures for the best service which they were able to perform unto him; and that they are so far from meriting a reward of justice, that they do not deserve a return of thanks. Three arguments our Saviour makes use of to evidence and prove this: 1. In respect to God, who is our absolute Lord and Master; and the argument lies thus, "If earthly masters do not owe so much as thanks to their servants for doing that which is commanded them, how much less can God owe the reward of eternal life to his servants, when they are never able to do all that is commanded them, in a perfect and sinless manner?" 2. In respect to ourselves, who are his bond-servants, his ransomed slaves, and consequently we are not our own men, but his who hath redeemed us: and accordingly do owe him all that service, yea, more than all that we are able to perform unto him: and therefore whatever reward is either promised or given, it is wholly to be ascribed to the Master's bounty, and not to the servants' merit. 3. To merit any thing by our good works is impossible, in regard of the works themselves, because all that we can do, although we did do all that is commanded us, is but our duty. The argument runs thus: "To bounden duty belongs no reward of justice; but all the service we do perform, yea, more than we can perform to God, is bounden duty; therefore there is due unto us no reward of justice but of free mercy." From the whole note, 1. That we are wholly the Lord's, both by a right of creation, and redemption also. 2. That as his we are, so him we ought to serve, by doing

all those things which he hath commanded us. 3. That when we have done all, we are to look for our reward, not of debt, but of grace. 4. That were our service and obedience absolutely perfect, yet it could not merit any thing at the hand of justice: *When ye have done all, say, &c.*

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13 And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

Observe here, 1. Though the Samaritans were bitter enemies to the Jews, and had been guilty of great incivility towards our Saviour, yet our Saviour in his journey to Jerusalem balks them not, but bestows the favour of a miracle upon them. Civil courtesy and respect may and ought to be paid to those that are the professed enemies of us, and our holy religion. Observe, 2. Though the leper by the law of God was to be separated from all other society, (God thereby signifying to his people, that the society of those that are spiritually contagious ought to be avoided,) yet the law of God did not restrain them from conversing with one another: accordingly these ten lepers get together, and are company for themselves. Fellowship is that we all naturally affect, though even in leprosy; lepers will flock together; where shall we find one spiritual leper alone? Drunkards and profane persons will be sure to consort with one another. Why should not God's children delight in an holy communion, when the wicked join hand in hand? Observe, 3. Though Jews and Samaritans could not abide one another, yet here in leprosy they accord; here was one Samaritan leper with the Jewish: common sufferings had made them friends, whom religion had disjoined. O what virtue is there in affliction to unite the most alienated and estranged hearts! Observe, 4. These lepers apply themselves to Christ the great Physician; they cry unto him for mercy, with respect to their afflictions; they jointly cry, they all lifted up their voice with fervent importunity. Teaching us our duty, to join our spiritual forces together, and set upon God by troops. O holy and happy violence that is thus offered to heaven! How

can we want blessings, when so many cords draw them down upon our heads?

14 And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

Observe here, 1. The preventing grace and mercy of Christ; their disease is cured ere it can be complained of: *Go, show yourselves unto the priests*, says Christ, and in their going they were cleansed, they were healed before they could come at the priests, that as the power that healed them was wholly Christ's, so might the praise be also. Observe, 2. A two-fold reason why Christ commanded them to go to the priests. 1. In compliance with the ceremonial law, which required the leper to be brought to them, to judge whether healed or not; and if so, to receive the offering prescribed in token of thankfulness. 2. For the trial of their obedience: had they stood upon terms with Christ, and said, *Alas! to what purpose is it to show ourselves to the priests; what good can their eyes do us?* We should be glad to see ourselves cured; but why should we go to them to see ourselves loathed? Had they thus expostulated, they had not been healed: what command soever we receive from Christ, we must rather consider the authority of the commander, than the weight of the thing commanded, for God delights to try our obedience by small precepts; happy for these lepers, that, in obedience to Christ, they went to the priests, for *as they went they were healed*.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God: 16 And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.

Observe here, 1. All were healed, but only one was thankful; the cure is wrought upon the bodies of all, thankfulness is found but in the heart of one: the will makes the difference in men, but he makes the difference in wills, who at first made the will. All these lepers were cured, all saw themselves cured; their sense was alike, their hearts were not alike. Observe, 2. The person that made this return of thankfulness to Christ, *He was a Samaritan*; that is, none of the Jewish nation, but one that

was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel: neither place nor parentage can block up the way, or stop the current, of God's free mercy, which reaches the unworthy and the ill-deserving. Observe, 3. How singly he returns his thanks; he gets away from his fellows to make his acknowledgment: there are cases wherein singularity is not only lawful, but laudable; instead of subjecting ourselves to others' examples, it is sometimes our duty to resolve to set an example to others; for it is much better to go the right way alone, than to err with company. Observe, 4. How speedily he returns his thanks: no sooner doth he see his cure, but he hastes to acknowledge it; a noble pattern of thankfulness. What speed of retribution is here! late payments of our thankfulness savour of ingratitude: it were happy for us christians, did we learn our duty of this Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said; Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

In the face of these ten lepers we may, as in a glass, behold the face and complexion of all mankind. How few are there, O Lord! scarce more than one in ten, who after signal mercies return suitable thanks. Men howl to God upon their beds, but run away from God as soon as they are raised up by him. Observe farther, What an exact account Christ keeps of his own dispensed favours: *Were there not ten cleansed?* He forgets our sins, but records his own mercies. It is one of his glorious titles, A God forgiving and forgetting iniquity; but his mercies are over all his works, and deserve everlasting remembrance. God keeps a register of his mercies towards us. O shall we not record the favours received from him, at once declare his bounty towards us, and our thankfulness towards him! Observe lastly, The thankful leper was a Samaritan, but the nine that were unthankful were Israelites. Learn thence; That the more we are bound to God, the more shameful is our ingratitude towards him; where God may justly expect the greatest returns of praise and service, he sometimes receiveth least. God has more rent, and better paid him, from a smoky cottage, than he has from some stately palaces.

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

The generality of the Jews, and particularly the Pharisees, expected that the promised Messiah should be a temporal prince, and deliver them from the Roman yoke, under which they groaned. Accordingly the Pharisees here demanded of our Saviour, *When the kingdom of God, of which he had so often spoken, should come?* Christ answers them, *That his kingdom cometh not with observation; that is, with pomp and splendour, which men may observe and gaze upon; but he tells them, the kingdom of God was now among them, by the ministry of John Baptist and himself; and was already set up in the hearts of his people, by the secret operations of his Holy Spirit. Learn hence, That the false notion which the Jews had of the Messiah, and his kingdom, (that he himself was to be a temporal prince, and his kingdom a secular kingdom, to be set up with a great deal of noise, pomp, and splendour,) did hinder the generality of them from believing in him. Secondly, That the kingdom which Christ designed to set up in the world, was altogether spiritual, not obvious to human senses, but managed in the hearts of his people by the sceptre of his Spirit. My kingdom cometh not with observation, but is within you.*

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23 And they shall say to you, See here; or see there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24 For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. 25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

In the remaining part of this chapter, our Saviour acquaints his disciples with what days of tribulation and distress were com-

ing on the Jewish nation in general, and on Jerusalem in particular. "Days of sufferings (as if our Saviour had said) are not far off, when you will wish for my bodily presence again among you, to support and comfort you; and when many seducers will rise up, pretending to be deliverers, *but go not you after them*; for after this generation have rejected and crucified me, my coming (says Christ) to execute vengeance upon my enemies and murderers at Jerusalem by the Roman soldiers, will be sudden, and like the lightning that shines in an instant from one part of the heavens to the other." From this coming of Christ to judge Jerusalem, which was an emblem of the final judgment, we may gather this instruction, That the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the judging of wicked and impenitent sinners, will be a very certain, sudden, and unexpected appearance.

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

In these verses our Saviour declares, That Jerusalem's destruction, and the world's final desolation at the great day, would be like the destruction of the old world in the days of Noah, and like the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot, and that both in regard of unexpectedness, and in regard of sensuality and security, as they before the flood were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage; that is, wholly given up to sensuality and debauchery; and did not know, that is, did not consider, the floods coming, till it swept them away; thus was it before the destruction of Jerusalem, and will be before the end of the world. Hence we learn, That as the old world perished by infidelity, security, and sensuality,

so will the same sins be prevailing before the destruction of this present world. *As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man.*

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32 Remember Lot's wife.

Here our Saviour advises them, that when they shall see the judgments of God breaking out upon Jerusalem, that they make all possible speed to get out of it, as Lot and his family did out of Sodom: and to take heed of imitating Lot's wife, who looking back became a pillar of salt, *Gen. xix.* Where observe, 1. Her offence, *She looked back.* 2. The punishment of her offence, *She became a pillar of salt.* Her offence in looking behind her was manifest disobedience to the divine command, which said, *Look not behind thee*; and proceeded either from carelessness or from covetousness, or from curiosity, or from compassion to those that she left behind her, and was undoubtedly the effect of great infidelity, she not believing the truth of what the angel had declared, as touching the certainty and suddenness of Sodom's destruction. The punishment of her offence was exemplary, *She became a pillar of salt*: that is, a perpetual monument of divine severity for her infidelity and disobedience. Where note, 1. The suddenness of her punishment: the justice of God surprises her in the very act of sin, with a present revenge. 2. The seeming disproportion betwixt the punishment and the offence: her offence was a forbidden look. From whence carnal reason may plead, "Was it not sufficient for her to lose her eyes, but must she lose her life?" but the easiness and reasonableness of the command aggravated her disobedience; and though her punishment may seem severe, it was not unjust. Now, says our Saviour, *Remember Lot's wife*: that is, let her example caution all of you against unbelief, disobedience, worldly-mindedness, contempt of God's threatenings, and lingerings after the forbidden society of lewd and wicked persons.

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. 34 I tell you, In that night there

shall be two *men* in one bed ; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 Two *women* shall be grinding together ; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36 Two *men* shall be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

In this hour, when judgment is come upon Jerusalem, Christ declares, that whosoever shall take any unchristian course to preserve his life, by denying him and his holy religion, he shall lose eternal life ; but he that for Christ's sake shall lose his natural life, instead of a mortal, shall enjoy an immortal life in bliss and glory. Here we learn, 1. That the love of temporal life is a great temptation to men, to deny Christ and his holy religion, in a day of trial. 2. That the surest way to attain eternal life, is cheerfully to lay down our temporal life, when the glory of Christ, and the honour of religion, requires it of us. Christ farther adds, that in this terrible night of Jerusalem's calamity, when destruction comes upon her, the providence of God will remarkably distinguish between one person and another : true believers, and constant professors, shall be delivered, and none else ; such shall escape the danger, others shall fall by it.

37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord ? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

The disciples hearing our Saviour speak of such tremendous calamities, enquire, Where these judgments should fall ? He answers them figuratively, and by a proverbial speech, That *where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together* : signifying, that Jerusalem, and the obdurate nation of the Jews, was the carcass which the Roman armies, whose ensign was the eagle, would quickly find out and feed upon ; and that Judea in general, and Jerusalem in particular, would be the theatre and stage of those tragical calamities. Learn thence, That the appointed messengers of God's wrath, and the instruments of his vengeance, will suddenly gather together, certainly find out, and severely punish, an impenitent people devoted to destruction. *Where the carcass is, (that is, the body of the Jewish nation,)*

*there will the eagles, that is, the Roman soldiers, be gathered together.*

#### CHAP. XVIII.

AND he spake a parable unto them to *this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint : 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man : 3 And there was a widow in that city ; and she came unto him, saying, *Avenge me of mine adversary.* 4 And he would not for a while : but afterward he said within himself, *Though I fear not God, nor regard man ;* 5 Yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will *avenge her*, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God *avenge his own elect*, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them ? 8 I tell you that he will *avenge them speedily.* Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?

There is no duty in christianity, the practice of which our Saviour presseth upon us more frequently than this duty of prayer. To encourage his disciples, (and us in them,) to fervency, importunity, and perseverance in this duty, he propounds here the parable of an unjust judge, who was overcome by an importunate widow, to do her justice contrary to his own inclination ; from whence our Saviour argues, That if importunity will prevail with a sinful man, to grant petitions offered to him ; how much more prevalent will such importunity be with the infinitely good God, to relieve the necessities of such as devoutly implore his help ? And the force of the argument lies thus : " The judge in the parable was an inferior and subordinate judge, was an unrighteous and unjust judge, was a merciless and hard-hearted judge ; and yet, upon her importunity, he avenged her : how much more will the sovereign and supreme Judge, the holy and righteous, the merciful and compassionate Judge of all the earth, hear and help his praying people, and be the just Avenger of those that fear him ? " From the whole note, 1. That

prayer, or a liberty of making our requests known to God, is an inestimable favour and privilege. He that considers the nature of God, and the nature of man, cannot question it: God is a being of infinite fullness and perfection; a self-sufficient, and an all-sufficient good; and man an indigent, helpless, dependent creature, full of wants, and obnoxious to dangers. 2. That prayer is not only an inestimable privilege, but an indispensable duty. So solicitous is God for our welfare and happiness, that he makes our privilege our duty, by the authority of his command; so that we are at once ungrateful to God, and unjust to ourselves, in the most exalted degree, if we do not pray unto him, and spread our wants before him. 3. That this duty of prayer is not an occasional, but a constant duty: *Men ought always to pray*; that is, 1. At all seasonable times and fit opportunities. We are said to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably; now the seasons for prayer are morning and evening. As the morning and evening sacrifice was constant among the Jews, and the fire was always upon the altar, and never went out; so he that prays morning and evening, may be said to be *instant in prayer*, and to *pray without ceasing*. 3. Always to pray, is an endeavour always to keep the heart in a praying frame, and to be very frequent in offering up pious ejaculations, and short mental prayers to God, as occasion shall offer; when in the field, in the shop, in the bed, when sleep departs, in the journey when alone, this may be done advantageously without loss of time, and acceptably without danger of hypocrisy, which too often mingles itself with our more set prayers. Observe, 4. We must not only pray constantly, but pray fervently, yea, importunately; if we would pray successfully, we must cry to God as the widow to the judge: vehemency and importunity are both helps and ornaments to prayer; they both fortify and beautify our prayers; they pierce the heavens, and offer an holy violence to God: *Oratio vincit invincibilem, et ligat omnipotentem; hæc vis Deo grata est*, says Tertullian, "God delights in such importunity."—*Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* If by the Son of man's coming we understand Christ's coming in judgment against Jerusalem, then the sense is this; "That when he comes to take vengeance on the obstinate Jews,

and to destroy their city, he will find but little faith, and patient waiting for help from God, in the land of Judea, and consequently little importuning him with incessant cries and supplications, as this poor woman did the unjust judge." 2. If by the Son of man's coming, we understand Christ's coming to judge the world at the last day, then the sense is, "When he cometh, he will find but few faithful ones, comparatively speaking; he will find but few sincere and serious christians, in whom the genuine effects and fruits are found." Learn, That when Christ shall come to judgment, he will find comparatively very few whose hearts have not fainted, and very many, who through the power that temptation has upon the frailty of human nature are fallen away: *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Verily, but little faith, and few faithful ones.

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The design and scope of our Saviour in this parable is, to reprove and condemn the Pharisees, and in them all other self-justifiers, who having an high opinion of, and trusting in, their own righteousness, despised others as vile persons, whose religion is not accompanied with ostentation, and who pretend not to such extraordinary degrees of sanctity as themselves. And the parable further shows, That an humble, self-condemned sinner, who though he has been

wicked, is now sensible of it, and with shame and sorrow confesses it before God, is more acceptable than he that vaunts of his virtue, and rests in the outward duties of religion: his pride and exaltation of himself shall abase him, while the other's humility shall exalt him. This is the general scope of the parable; the particular observations from it are these: 1. The Pharisee and the publican both pray, they both pray together in the place of prayer, the holy temple, and they both pray, *apud se*, with and within themselves. Where the duty and action is the same, there may be a vast difference in the purpose and intention: Doth an humble saint pray? so may a haughty hypocrite: *Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a publican.* Observe, 2. The Pharisee's prayer, *He stood and prayed with himself, God, I thank thee, &c.* Where note, His gesture, *He stood and prayed*; Standing and kneeling are praying gestures, but sitting is a rude indecency, except in cases of necessity. "In prayer (says pious bishop Hall) I will either stand as a servant to my Master, or kneel as a subject to my Prince." Note farther, It is said, *He prayed*: but here is not one petition, but thanksgiving! *God, I thank thee, &c.* Whence learn, That thanksgiving is a part of prayer; Hannah's prayer, as it is called, 1 Sam. ii. is a canticle, or song of praise; we then pray best when we praise God most. Again, see the Pharisee's pride in this his prayer: this proud beggar shows not his wounds, but his worth, not his rags, but his robes, not his misery, but his bravery; he brings God Almighty in a reckoning of his services: *I fast twice a week, I give alms of all that I possess*, and thanks God more that others were bad, than that himself was good. Had the Pharisee with an humble mind thanked God for his restraining grace, that though he was not so good as he should be, that yet he was not so vile and bad as some others, this had been no fault; but when he comes before God with a proud and scornful mind, inwardly pleased that others were so bad, and so much worse than himself; giving thanks rather for others' badness, than his own goodness: this is a wickedness incident to none but devilish dispositions. Learn hence, That whatsoever shows of goodness an hypocrite may make, yet he is inwardly glad of, and takes a secret delight in, others' badness. *God, I thank thee that I am not as this pub-*

*lican*; which was a kind of triumph, and proud insultation over the poor publican; he would seem to thank God that he was not so bad as the publican, when indeed he was glad that the publican was not so good as himself. Observe, 3. The publican's behaviour, in an humble sight and sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness, *he stood afar off*, probably in the court of the Gentiles, where all sorts of sinners might come; acknowledging thereby that he was unworthy to come near the holy majesty of God; not presuming to *lift up his eyes to heaven*, that place of perfect holiness and purity; but, like a true self-condemned penitent, smote upon his breast, and in bitter remorse of soul said, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* Hence learn, That a truly humble temper of mind well becomes us in all our approaches and addresses to God, and is more acceptable to him than all pompous performances whatsoever. For observe lastly, The publican being thus condemned of himself, departs justified by God: *He went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee*; the Pharisee justified himself, but the publican was justified by God. Thence learn, That a penitent sinner, who is indeed poor in spirit, is far more esteemed of God, than he that makes long prayers, fasts often, tithes all his substance, and prides himself in all this. Without humility all is vain-glory and hypocrisy; and the seeming most sanctified person that has it not, is like a painted sepulchre, beautiful without, but full of rottenness within.

15 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.

Observe here, 1. A solemn action performed; children, infants, sucking children, as the word signifies, are brought to Christ, that he might bless them; the parents looking upon Christ as a prophet, as a great and extraordinary prophet, persuade themselves, that by his prayer, and laying his hands on the children, they should be preserved

from bodily diseases, and from Satan's power, and that he would confer upon them all needful blessings. Learn, 1. That infants are capable of benefit by Jesus Christ. 2. That it is the best office that parents can perform unto their children, to bring them unto Christ, that they may be made partakers of that benefit. 3. That if infants are capable of benefit by Christ, if capable of his blessing on earth, and presence in heaven, if they be subjects of his kingdom of grace, and heirs of his kingdom of glory, then may they be baptized; for they that are within the covenant, *Acts ii. 39.* have a right to the privileges of the covenant, and to baptism, the seal of the covenant. And if Christ denies not infants the kingdom of heaven, which is the greater; what reason have his ministers to deny them the benefit of baptism, which is the less? Learn, 4. That Christ will have all his disciples and followers to resemble little children in such properties wherein they may be patterns to them, viz. in humility, and innocence, in freedom from malice and revenge, docility and teachableness, in cleaving to, and depending upon, their parents, and in contentedness with their condition: *Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein.*

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

We have here a considerable person, a ruler, coming to Christ, with an important question in his mouth, *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* Where note, 1. He believes the certainty of a future state. 2. He professes a desire of an eternal happiness in that state. 3. He declares his readiness and willingness to do some good thing in order to the obtaining of that happiness. Hence learn, That the light of nature, or natural religion, teaches men, that good works are necessary to salvation; or that some good thing must be done by them who at death expect eternal life; it is not talking well, and professing well, but living well, that entitles us to heaven and eternal life.

19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

Our Saviour here reproves this person for calling him good, when he did not own him to be God; saying, *There is none good, that is, essentially and originally good, ab-*

solutely and immutably good, *but God only*; nor any derivatively good, but he that receives his goodness from God also.

20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

Note here, That the duties directed to by our Saviour, are the duties of the second table, nothing being a better evidence of our unfeigned love to God than a sincere performance of our duty to our neighbour; love to man is a fruit and testimony of our love to God. Learn thence, That such as are defective in the duties of the second table, charity and justice towards man, do make but a counterfeit show of religion, though they pretend to the highest degree of holiness and love towards God.

21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

This assertion might be very true, according to the Pharisees' sense and interpretation of the law, which condemned only the gross outward act, not the inward lusts and motions of the heart. An external obedience to the letter of the law this man might have possibly performed; this made him think well of himself, and conclude the goodness of his own condition. Learn hence, How prone men are to think the best of themselves, and to have too high an opinion of their own goodness and righteousness before God; this is very natural, but dangerous and fatal.

22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Here observe, 1. Our Lord's admonition, *Yet lackest thou one thing*, which was true self-denial, in renouncing the sin of covetousness, and the inordinate love of worldly wealth. We ought, in the midst of our abundance, to maintain a readiness of disposition to part with all for God's sake, that is dear unto us in this world. Observe, 2. Our Lord's injunction, *Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor*. This was not a common, but a special precept, given particularly to this rich man for trial; like that given to Abraham, *Gen. xxii.* and to convince him of his corrupt



confidence in riches; yet is the precept thus far of general use to all, to teach us so to condemn worldly possessions, as to be willing to part with them all at God's pleasure and when they prejudice our salvation.

23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

Here note, The effect which our Saviour's admonition had upon this person, *He was very sorrowful.* Learn thence, That carnal men are exceeding sorrowful when they cannot win heaven in their own way. 2. That such as are wedded to the world, will renounce Christ rather than the world, when the world and Christ stand in competition. *He went away sorrowful,* (St. Mark x. 22.) *for he was very rich.*

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? 27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Our holy Lord takes occasion from the rich man's departure from him, to discourse concerning the danger of riches, and the difficulties that attend rich men in their way to heaven. From whence we may collect and gather, 1. That rich men do certainly meet with more difficulties in their way to heaven than other men; it is difficult to withdraw their affections from riches, to place their supreme love upon God in the midst of their riches, and to depend entirely upon God in a rich condition; *for the rich man's wealth is his strong tower.* 2. That yet the fault lies not in riches, but in rich men, who by placing their trust and reposing their confidence in riches, do render their salvation difficult, if not impossible. 3. Our Saviour's proverbial speech of *a camel's going through the eye of a needle* implies thus much, that it is not only a great difficulty, but an utter impossibility, for such as abound in worldly wealth, and place their confidence therein, to be saved, without an extra-

ordinary grace and assistance from God. 'Tis hard for God to make a rich man happy, because he thinks himself happy without God. 4. That as difficult and impossible as this may seem to men, yet nothing is impossible with God; he can change the heart of the rich, by the rich and powerful influences of his Holy Spirit: *That which is impossible with men is possible with God.*

28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

It was well done and wisely done of Peter, to leave all and follow Christ; it was the best bargain he ever made in all his life. But observe, How he magnifies that little he had left for Christ, and unbars it in with a note of admiration: *Lo! we have left all and followed thee.* Learn hence, That though it be very little that we suffer for Christ, and have forsaken upon his account, yet we are prone to magnify and admire it, as if it were some great matter. Lord, says Peter, *we have left all.* "What all, man, hadst thou to leave? A few ragged nets and tattered fisher-boat: a great all indeed, next to nothing at all: scarce worth mentioning, and yet how it is magnified!" *Behold, we have left all and followed thee.*

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Observe here, The lenity and kindness of our Lord's gracious answer: he tells his disciples, that they who had left all and followed him, should be no losers by him; that is, in this world they shall receive manifold; *St. Mark*, chap. x. 30, says, *an hundred-fold*; But how so? *Non formaliter, sed eminenter: non in specie, sed in valore*: "not in kind, but in equivalency:" not an hundred brethren, and sisters, and possessions, in kind; but he shall enjoy all that in God, which all creatures would be to him, if they were multiplied an hundred times. O the sanctifying gifts and saving graces, the supporting comforts and ravishing consolations, of the Holy Spirit, are a sufficient compensation for any thing, for all, yea, for more than all, that we can part with for the sake of Christ.

31 Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. 34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

We find our blessed Saviour very frequently acquainting his disciples with his approaching sufferings, to prevent the offence that they might take at them, when the providence of God brought them on: this design was to arm them with expectation of his sufferings; and to quicken them to preparation for their own; yet, it is here said, *That the disciples understood none of these sayings*: Why so? were not the words easy enough to be understood? Yes, but they could not reconcile them to the notion of the Messiah which they had drank in: they concluded he should be a temporal prince, and subdue their temporal enemies: but could not conceive how he, that should redeem Israel, should die, and be thus barbarously used. We have great need to consider well what notions we have concerning the things of God, before we entertain them; for false notions once taken up, are not without great difficulty laid down.

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging; 36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37 And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, *thou Son of David*, have mercy on me. 39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, *Thou Son of David*, have mercy on me. 40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be

brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. 43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

This chapter concludes with the recital of a famous miracle, wrought by our Saviour upon a blind man, whom St. Mark calls Bartimeus. Where we have observable, 1. The blind man's faith in acknowledging Christ to be the Messiah; for so much the title of *Son of David* did import. 2. Observe his fervency as well as his faith: he cried to Christ for the mercy of healing, *Have mercy on me, thou Son of David*. A true sense of want, either bodily or spiritual, will cause a soul to cry to Christ with earnestness and importunity. Observe, 3. The great compassion and condescension of Christ towards this blind man: *He stood still, he called him, and enlightened his eyes*. Observe, 4. Before Christ would restore the blind man to sight, he must sensibly complain of the want of sight, and cry unto him for it. Christ knows all his creatures' wants, but takes no notice of them, till they make them known to him by prayer. Observe, 5. How much Christ magnifies faith, what he attributes to it, and how he rewards the least exercise of it: *Jesus said, thy faith hath saved thee*. Christ himself was the efficient Cause of the blind man's healing, but he exerted his divine power upon the exercise of the blind man's faith; and accordingly says, *Thy faith hath saved thee*. Note, 6. In what way and manner the blind man doth express his thankfulness to Christ for his recovered sight: *He followed him, glorifying God*. Mercy received from Christ is then well improved when it engages us to follow Christ; this should be the effect of all salvations wrought for us. He praiseth God best, that serveth him most. The life of thankfulness consists in the thankfulness of the life.

## CHAP. XIX.

AND Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 And, be-

hold, *there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

The history which relates the calling and conversion of Zaccheus the publican, is ushered in with a note of wonder: *Behold, there was a man named Zaccheus.* It is both great and good news to hear of a soul converted unto God; especially such a remarkable sinner as Zaccheus was: for, 1. He was by profession a publican; a calling that carried extortion in its face, and bade defiance to his conversion; yet, behold, from the toll-booth is Zaccheus called to be a disciple, and Matthew an apostle: such is the freeness of divine grace, that it often calls the greatest sinners, and triumphs in their powerful conversion. 2. He was a chief publican, and probably one of the chief of sinners, yet behold him among the chief of saints. Lord! what penitent need despair of thy mercy, when he sees a publican, nay, the chief of publicans, gone to heaven! 3. It is added, as a farther circumstance, *that he was rich*: his trade was not a greater obstacle to his conversion than his wealth: not that there is any malignity in riches, considered in themselves, but they become a snare through the corruption of our natures. Zaccheus had not been so famous a convert, if he had not been rich; if more difficulty, yet was there more glory in the conversion of rich Zaccheus. To all these might be added a fourth circumstance, namely, that Zaccheus was converted in his old age, after a long habit of sin contracted. Such instances, though few, has God left upon record in scripture; Abraham and Manasses in the Old Testament, Zaccheus and Paul in the New.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.

Zaccheus desired to see Jesus, this was a sight that few rich men desired to see; the sight of Cesar's face upon their coin is more pleasing to them, than to see the face of Christ in his ordinances: yet it was not faith, but fancy and curiosity, that made Zaccheus climb the sycamore to see Jesus; but the curiosity of the eye gave occasion for the belief of the heart: he that desires to see Jesus is in the way to enjoy him.

'Tis good to be near the place where Christ is, whatever principles bring us thither.

5 And when Jesus came to that place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

What an instance is here of Christ's preventing grace and mercy! Zaccheus climbs up into the sycamore to see Jesus. Jesus first sees him; little did Zaccheus think, that Jesus should cast up his eyes to him: Christ's looks are converting looks; there went a divine power along with them, to change the heart of him whom he looked upon; he that could heal a disease by the hem of his garment, could change an heart with the glance of his eye. Observe farther, Christ doth not only note, but name Zaccheus; *He bids him come down, for he must abide at his house*: what a sweet familiarity was here! Though the distance be infinitely great betwixt our Saviour and ourselves, yet he treats us not with a majestic stateliness, but with a gracious affability. Some note, That Zaccheus was the first man we read of, to whose house Christ invited himself. Observe lastly, With what speed Zaccheus hastens down, and with what alacrity he entertains our Saviour; curiosity carried him up, but love brings him down, and he entertains Christ joyfully: but alas! it was but for a few hours. Lord! how great is the happiness of that man that receives and entertains thee, not for a day or a year, or for millions of years, but for everlasting ages! O let us welcome thee into our hearts by faith, whilst we are here on earth, and then thou wilt make us welcome with thyself everlastingly in thy kingdom.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

That is, the Pharisees who were here, were highly discontented that Christ went to a publican's house, whom they looked upon as the worst of men; their eye was evil, because Christ's was good. Whither should the physician go, but to the sick? the whole need him not. However, the envious Pharisees censure and condemn him for it. Lord, who can hope to escape the aspersions of censorious tongues, whilst

spotless innocence, and perfect holiness, falls under the lash of them? It is sufficient for the servant to be as the master.

8 And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.

Two things are here observable, The greatness of his charity, and the justness of his restitution. As to his charity, observe, 1. The freeness of it, not *I lend*, but *I give*. 2. The readiness of it: not *I will*, but *I do give*. 3. The justness and honesty of it, *my goods*, not my spoils; what is my own, and not rent from others by rapine or extortion. 4. The largeness and extensiveness of his charity: *Half of my goods*, not an inconsiderable pittance. 5. The fitness of his charity, *To the poor*, not to the rich; not to his rich heirs, but to his poor neighbours. Again, as his charity was large, so his restitution was just; as he gave half to the poor, so he restored four-fold to the wronged. What an evidence was here of a true penitent! confession and satisfaction are both found with him. Whenever repentance is sincere and saving, there is not only a hatred of former sins, but a vigorous exercise of graces contrary to those sins.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

That which Zaccheus gave to the poor, was nothing to what Christ gave to him; it was but dross he gave to them, it was salvation Christ gave to him. Where is the man that can say, God is in his debt for acts of charity and mercy? Where is he that will not own God the best and quickest Paymaster? *This day is salvation come to this house*: 'tis thine in title, and ere long it shall be thine in possession: *Forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham*; that is, either a natural son of Abraham, a Jew; or a spiritual son, a believer; the heir of Abraham's faith, which was also imputed to him for righteousness. O happy Zaccheus! thou hast climbed up from thy sycamore to heaven, and by thy charity and justice hast purchased to thyself a kingdom that fadeth not away.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Observe, 1. A description of man's deplorable state, and undone condition: he is *lost*. 2. The care of Christ to seek and recover man out of that lost state: *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost*. Learn, 1. That man's condition is a lost condition, and every unregenerated man is a lost man; he has lost his God, his soul, his happiness, his excellency, his liberty, his ability. 2. The great errand that Christ came into the world upon, it was to seek and to save lost sinners: this he does by his blood, by his word, by his Spirit, and by his rod.

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here* is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere

man : thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow : 23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury ? 24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given : and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

For the better understanding of this parable, we must, 1. Consider the occasion of it ; 2. The design and scope of it ; 3. The lessons of instruction which our Saviour intended us by it. As to the former ; the occasion of our Saviour's uttering this parable seems to be this, He was now going up to Jerusalem to die ; some of the company were of opinion, that he would immediately enter upon his kingdom, and act as a temporal prince, delivering them from the Romans, and destroying his and their enemies : he lets them understand the quite contrary, that he must die and rise again, and ascend into heaven, and then return again and receive the kingdom ; and that he was now taking his last journey to Jerusalem, in order to that end. 2. The design and scope of the parable, together with the interpretation of it, is this, The *nobleman* here mentioned is our Saviour himself, who in his state of great humiliation was but like a nobleman : his *going into a far country*, signifies his return from earth to heaven : *his coming back again*, signifies his coming to judgment : *his calling his servants*, and *delivering them their talents*, intimates to us the various gifts which he bestows upon the sons of men, all which are to be em-

ployed in his service, and improved to his glory : *his calling his servants to an account*, plainly signifies, That when Christ comes to judgment, he will have an account of every individual person, how they used the gifts, and improved the talents, intrusted with them ; and that they may expect to be impartially rewarded according to their works, for God will appear a righteous God, and will condemn sinners out of their own mouths, and a most certain and final ruin will be their portion, whilst those that were faithful in his service shall be crowned with his reward. Now from the whole we may learn these lessons of instruction : 1. That our Lord's state of humiliation and great abasement on earth being passed and over, a glorious state of exaltation he is now arrived at in heaven. God has exalted him with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven. 2. That, clothed with infinite majesty and power, and attended with an innumerable host of glorious angels and saints, this exalted Saviour will come to judge angels and men. 3. That in the mean time Christ variously dispenses to his servants particular talents, to be employed and improved for his own glory and his church's good. 4. That there will most certainly be a reckoning-day, or a time when our Lord will take an account of men's improving those gifts and graces, which were given them as so many talents to be improved by them. 5. That there will be degrees of happiness and misery in the other world, according to men's degrees of faithfulness or negligence in this. 6. That it is abominably false and impious to charge God, as being rigid and severe with men, and requiring impossibilities at their hands : *For out of their own mouths will God condemn them*. Lastly, That the condition of God's faithful servants will be unspeakably happy, and that of the unprofitable servant intolerably miserable, both in this world and in the next : the righteous shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and be confirmed therein, with an utter impossibility of losing that happiness. The wicked, who would not submit to Christ's authority, shall not be able to resist his power. They that would not suffer Christ to reign over them, shall at the last day be brought forth and slain before him. *Those mine enemies that would not that I, &c.*

28 And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Je-

rusalem. 29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the mount of Olives*, he sent two of his disciples. 30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him hither*. 31 And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. 32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. 33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him. 35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36 And, as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38 Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Our Lord (as is noted before) was now upon his last journey to Jerusalem, where he was to shed his blood, and lay down his life for the redemption and salvation of a lost world; and it is observable, what a double demonstration he gives of his great willingness and forwardness to go up to Jerusalem, there to die. 1. Both St. Luke here, and St. Mark, chap. x. 32. tell us, that *he went before* the company leading the way, when he went to suffer. Lord! with what alacrity and holy cheerfulness

didst thou manage the great work of man's redemption! None ever went so willingly to a crown as thou to thy cross. 2. Our Saviour, who all his life travelled like a poor man on foot, now he goes up to Jerusalem to die for us, he will ride, to show his great forwardness to lay down his life for us, But what was the beast he rode upon! An ass's colt; to fulfil that prophecy, Zech. ix. 9. *Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh, riding upon an ass*: yea, it was a colt upon which never man rode before; to let us see how the most unruly and untamed creatures become obedient and obsequious to Christ, and render themselves serviceable to him at his pleasure. It was also a borrowed ass, whereby our Saviour's right to all the creatures was manifested; and accordingly he bids his disciples to tell the owner, *That the Lord had need of him*: not your Lord, or our Lord, but *the Lord*, that is, he that is Lord of the whole earth, *whose are the cattle upon a thousand hills*. Here note, What a clear and full demonstration Christ gave of his divine nature: of his omniscieny in foreseeing and foretelling the event; of his omnipotency in inclining the heart, and overruling the will of the owner to let the colt go; and of his sovereignty, that as he was Lord of the creatures, he could command and call for their services whenever he needed them. The colt being brought, and our Saviour set thereon; observe, next, The actions of the multitude in acknowledging Christ to be our King; they spread their clothes in the way, casting their garments on the ground, for him to ride upon, according to the custom of princes when they ride in state; yea, the multitude do not only disrobe their backs, but expend their breath in joyful acclamations and loud hosannas, wishing all manner of prosperity to their meek but mighty Prince. In this princely, yet poor and despicable pomp, doth our Saviour enter the famous city of Jerusalem. O how far was our holy Lord from affecting worldly greatness and grandeur! he despised that glory which worldly hearts fondly admire; yet because he was a King, he would be proclaimed such, and have his kingdom confessed, applauded, and blessed: but that it might appear, that his kingdom was not of this world, he abandons all worldly magnificence. O glorious, yet homely pomp! O meek, yet mighty Prince! Observe lastly, The peevish envy of the wicked Pharisees who were then

in company ; they grudge our Saviour this poor honour, they envy him this small triumph of coming into the city upon an ass's colt, attended by a company of poor people, strewing the way with boughs of trees, with hosannas and joyful acclamations in their mouths : these poor people's mouths they would have stopped ; *Master, rebuke thy disciples* ; they did not like the music. Christ tells them, that they labour in vain to suppress the testimony given him by his disciples, for *if they should be silent, the stones would cry out* ; yea, cry out shame of them for neglecting their duty : as if Christ had said, The speechless stones would speak, and give witness to me, if men will not. Learn hence, They that are owned of God, shall not want ownings and witnessings from man, at one time or other, in one way or other ; though the envy and malice of men do never so much gainsay and oppose it.

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

No sooner did our Saviour come within the sight and view of the city of Jerusalem, but he burst out into tears, at the consideration of their obstinacy, and wilful rejecting of the offers of grace and salvation made unto them ; and also he wept to consider of the dreadful judgments that hung over their heads for those sins, even the utter ruin and destruction of their city and temple. Learn hence, 1. That good men ever have been, and are, men of tender and compassionate dispositions, sorrowing not only for their own sufferings, but for others' calamities. 2. That Christ sheds tears as well as blood for the lost world ; Christ wept over Jerusalem, as well as bled for her. 3. That Christ was infinitely more concerned for the salvation of poor sinners, than for his own death and sufferings : not the sight of his own cross, but Jerusalem's calamities, made him weep.

42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

By the things belonging to their peace, we are to understand the presence of Christ amongst them, the preaching of the gospel to them : *She did not know*, that is, she did not consider, she did not prize and im-

prove, her privileges as she ought ; but stopped her ears against the words of Christ, and closed her eyes against the miraculous works of Christ, till at last they were hidden from her eyes. Learn hence, 1. That the time of a people's enjoying the light and liberty of the gospel, is a limited day, it is a short day : *If thou hadst known in this thy day*. 2. That it is the sad and usual lot of the gospel not to be embraced and entertained by a people to whom it is in mercy sent, till it be too late, and the time of their visitation be past and over : *O that thou hadst known ; but now thou shalt never know, now they are hid from thine eyes*. But how hid ? Was there no more preaching in Jerusalem ; no public ministry after that day ? Yes, behold the patience and mercy of Christ in waiting upon this people. After this, Christ sent the whole college of apostles, and they preached there the things belonging to their temporal and eternal peace ; but they wanted hearts to consider, and their ruin was unavoidable.

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Here we have a prophetic prediction of the total and final destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, who begirt the city round, burnt the temple, starved the people, and brought such ruin and destruction upon the place, as no history could ever parallel : the reason is assigned, *because they knew not the time of their visitation* ; that is, the time when God visited them with his gospel, first by the ministry of John, then by the preaching of Christ himself, and afterwards by his disciples and apostles. Hence learn, 1. That when God gives his gospel to a people, he gives that people a merciful and a gracious visitation. 2. That for a people not to know, but neglect the time of their gracious visitation, is a God-provoking, and a wrath-procurring sin : *Because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation, therefore the time shall come, that thine enemies shall lay thee even with the ground, and not leave one stone upon another* ; which, history tells us, was literally

fulfilled, when Turnus Rufus, with his plough, ploughed up the very foundation-stones upon which the temple stood. Lord, how has sin laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms!

45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought. 46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. 47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests, and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him; 48 And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

No sooner was our blessed Saviour entered Jerusalem, but his first walk was to the temple, and his first work was to purge and reform it from abuses, not to ruin and destroy it because it had been abused. But what was the profanation of the temple, that so offended our Saviour? *Answer.* In the court of the Gentiles, the outward court of the temple, there was a public mart or market kept, where were sold oxen, sheep, and doves, for sacrifice, which otherwise the people must have brought up along with them from their houses: as a pretended ease therefore to the people, the priests ordered these things to be sold hard by the altar; but our blessed Saviour being justly offended at this profanation of his Father's house, cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple: teaching us, that there is a special reverence due to God's house, both for the Owner's sake, and for the service sake: nothing but holiness can become the place where God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness. The reason is added, *My house is the house of prayer*; where by prayer is to be understood, the whole worship and service of God, of which prayer is an eminent and principal part. That which gives denomination to an house, is most certainly the chief work to be done in that house; now God's house being called *an house of prayer*, implies that prayer is a chief and principal work to be performed in this house; yet take we heed, that we set not the ordinances of God at variance one with another; we must not idolize one ordinance, and vilify another, but reverence them all, and pay an awful respect to all

divine institutions. Our blessed Saviour here in his house of prayer preached daily to the people, as well as prayed with them; and all the people were as attentive to hear his sermons, as he was constant at their prayers. Prayer sanctifies the word, and the word fits us for prayer. If we would glorify God, and edify ourselves, we must put honour upon all the ordinances of God, and diligently attend them upon all occasions.

## CHAP. XX.

AND it came to pass, *that* on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, 2 And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? 3 And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: 4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? 5 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? 6 But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. 7 And they answered, That they could not tell whence it was. 8 And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

The Pharisees having often quarrelled at our Saviour's doctrine before, they call in question his mission and authority now: although they might easily have understood his divine mission by his divine miracles; for Almighty God never impowered any to work miracles that were not sent by him. Our blessed Saviour, understanding their design, gives them no direct answer, but replies to their question by asking them another: *The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?* that is, was it of divine institution, or of human invention? plainly implying, that the calling of them who call themselves the ministers of God, ought to be from God: *No man ought to take that honour upon him, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*, Heb. v. 8.



The Pharisees reply, that they could not tell whence John had his mission and authority; which was a manifest untruth: they knew it, but durst not own it. By refusing to tell the truth, they fall into a lie against the truth; thus one sin ennares and draws men on to the commission of more: such as will not speak exact truth according to their knowledge, they fall into the sin of lying against their knowledge and their conscience. Our Saviour answers them, *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things*: he did not say, I cannot, or I will not tell you, but I do not, I need not tell you; because the miracles which I work before you are a sufficient demonstration of my divine commission, that I am sent of God among you; because God never set the seal of his omnipotency to a lie, nor impowered any impostor to work real miracles.

9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. 10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. 11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. 12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. 13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him, when they see him. 14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. 17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then

that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 19 And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

In the parable before us, the Jewish church is compared to a vineyard, God the Father to an householder, his planting, pruning, and fencing his vineyard, denotes his care to furnish his church with all needful helps and means to make it fruitful; his letting it out to husbandmen, signifies the committing the care of his church to the priests and Levites, the public pastors and governors of the church; his servants are the prophets and apostles whom he sent from time to time, to admonish them to bring forth answerable fruits to the cost which God had expended on them; his son is Jesus Christ, whom the rulers of the Jewish church slew and murdered. So that the design and scope of the parable is, to discover to the Jews, particularly to the Pharisees, their obstinate impenitency under all the means of grace, their bloody cruelty towards the prophets of God, their tremendous guilt in crucifying the Son of God; for all which God would unchurch them finally, ruin their nation, and set up a church among the Gentiles, that should bring forth much better fruit than the Jewish church ever did. From the whole, note, 1. That the church is God's vineyard; a vineyard is a place inclosed, a place well planted, well fruited, and exceeding dear and precious to the planter, and the owner of it. 2. That as dear as God's vineyard is unto him, in case of barrenness and unfruitfulness, it is in great danger of being destroyed and laid waste by him. 3. That the only way and course to engage God's care over his vineyard, and to prevent its being given to other husbandmen, is to give him the fruits of it; 'tis but a vineyard that God lets out, it is no inheritance: no people ever had so many promises of God's favour as the Jews; nor ever enjoyed so many privileges whilst they continued in his favour, as they did; but for rejecting Christ and his holy doctrine they are a de-

spised, scattered people throughout the world. See the note on Matt. xxi. 39, 40.

20 And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. 21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of *any*, but teachest the way of God truly: 22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cesar, or no? 23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why temptye me? 24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cesar's. 25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar the things which be Cesar's, and unto God the things which be God's. 26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us, that these spies, sent forth to ensnare our Saviour about paying tribute to Cesar, were the Pharisees and Herodians: the former were against paying tribute, looking upon the Roman emperor as an usurper; the latter were for it. These two opposite parties concluded, that, let our Saviour answer how he would, they should entrap him; if, to please the Pharisees, he denied paying tribute, then he is accused of sedition; if, to gratify the Herodians, he voted for paying tribute, then he is pronounced an enemy to the liberty of his country, and exposed to a popular odium. But observe with what wisdom and caution our Lord answers them: he calls for the Roman penny, and asks them, Whose superscription it bare? they answer, Cesar's. Then says he, *Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*. As if he had said, "Your admitting the Roman coin amongst you, is an evidence that you are under subjection to the Roman emperor; because the coining and imposing of money is an act of sovereign authority; therefore you having owned Cesar's authority over you, by accepting of his coin

amongst you, give unto him his just dues, and *render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*." Learn hence, 1. That our Saviour was no enemy to magistracy and civil government; there was no truer paymaster of the king's dues, than he that was King of kings; he preached it, and he practised it, Matt. xvii. 27. 2. Where a kingdom is in subjection to a temporal prince, whether by descent, election, or conquest he derives the title, the subjects ought from a principle of conscience to pay tribute to him. 3. That as Christ is no enemy to the civil rights of princes, and his religion exempts none from paying their civil dues, so princes should be as careful not to rob him of his divine honour, as he is not to wrong them of their civil rights. As Christ requires all his followers to *render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*, so princes should oblige all their subjects to *render unto God the things that are God's*.

27 Then came to *him* certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, 28 Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also. And they left no children, and died. 32 Last of all the woman died also. 33 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. 34 And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: 35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: 36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. 37

Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

Our blessed Saviour having put the Pharisees and Herodians to silence in the foregoing verses, here the Sadducees encounter him. This sect denied the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, and as an objection against both, they propound a case to our Saviour, of a woman that had seven husbands; they demanded whose wife of the seven this woman should be at the resurrection? As if they had said, "If there be a resurrection of bodies at the great day, surely there will be a resurrection of relations too, and the other world will be like this, in which men will marry as they do here; and if so, *whose wife of the seven shall this woman be?* they all having an equal claim to her." Now our Saviour, for resolving of this question, first shows the different state of men in this and in the other world: *The children of this world, says Christ, marry and are given in marriage;* but in the resurrection they do neither. As if our Lord had said, "After men have lived a while in this world, they die, and therefore marriage is necessary to maintain a succession of mankind; but in the other world, men shall become immortal, and live for ever; and then the reason of marriage will wholly cease; for when men can die no more, there will be no need of any new supplies of mankind." Secondly, Our Saviour having got clear of the Sadducees' objection, by taking away the ground and foundation of it, he produces an argument for the proof of the soul's immortality, and the body's resurrection, thus: "Those to whom Almighty God pronounces himself a God, are alive; but God pronounces himself a God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, many hundred years after their bodies were dead; therefore their souls are yet alive, otherwise God could not be their God." *For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* From the whole note, 1. That there is no opinion so absurd, no error so monstrous, that having had a mother will die for lack of a nurse: the ceasless opinion of the mortality of the soul, and of the annihilation of the body, finds

Sadducees to profess and propagate it. Learn, 2. The certainty of another life after this, in which men shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable, according as they behave themselves here: though some men live like beasts, they shall not die like them, neither shall their last end be like theirs. Note, 3. The glorified saints, in the morning of the resurrection, shall be like unto the glorious angels; not like them in essence and nature, but like them in their properties and qualities, namely, in holiness and purity, in immortality and incorruptibility; and also like them in their way and manner of living. They shall no more stand in need of meat or drink than the angels do; but shall live the same heavenly and immortal lives that the angels live. Note, 4. That all those that are in covenant with God, whose God the Lord is, their souls do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies at the resurrection shall be sharers in the same happiness with their souls. If God be just, the soul must live; and the body must rise; for good men must be rewarded, and wicked men punished. God will most certainly, one time or other, plentifully reward the righteous, and punish the evil doers; but this being not always done in this life, the justice of God requires it to be done in the next.

39 Then certain of the scribes answering, said, Master, thou hast well said. 40 And after that they durst not ask him any *question at all.* 41 And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? 42 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 43 Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. 44 David therefore calleth him Lord; how is he then his son?

The design of our blessed Saviour in propounding this question to the Pharisees, [how Christ could be David's son, when David by inspiration called him Lord] was two-fold: 1. To confute the people's erroneous opinion touching the person of the Messiah, who they thought should be a mere man, of the stock and lineage of David only, and not the Son of God. 2. To strengthen the faith of his disciples touching his Godhead, against the time

that they should see him suffer and rise again : the place Christ alludes to is, *Psal. cx. 1. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand. The Lord*, that is, God the Father, *said to my Lord*, that is, to God the Son ; who was to be incarnate, whom David calleth his Lord, both as God, and as Mediator, his Lord by a right of creation and redemption also : now the question our Saviour puts to the Pharisees is this, How Christ could be both David's Lord, and David's Son ? no son being lord of his own father ; therefore if Christ were David's Sovereign, he must be more than man, more than David's son. As man, he was David's son ; as God-man, was David's Lord. Note hence, 1. That though Christ was truly and really Man, yet he was more than a mere man ; he was Lord unto, and the salvation of, his own forefathers. Note, 2. That the only way to reconcile the scriptures which speak concerning Christ, is to believe and acknowledge him to be both God and Man in one person. The Messiah, as man, was to come forth out of David's loins ; but as God-man, was David's Lord, his Sovereign and Saviour : as man, he was David's Son ; as God-man, he was Lord of his own father.

45 Then, in the audience of all the people, he said unto his disciples, 46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts ; 47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers : the same shall receive greater damnation.

Observe here, What it is that our Saviour condemns ; not civil salutations in the market-place, not the chief seats in the synagogue, not the uppermost rooms at feasts, but their fond affecting of these things, and their ambitious aspiring after them ; it was not their taking, but their loving, the uppermost rooms at feasts, which our Saviour condemns. God is the God of order, there may and ought to be a precedence among persons ; God commands us to give honour to whom honour is due, but pride and ambition are detestable and hateful vices, especially in such as are preachers, and ought to be patterns of humility. Observe,

2. How our Saviour condemns the Pharisees for their gross hypocrisy, in colouring over their abominable covetousness with a specious pretence of religion, making long prayers in the temple and synagogues for widows, and thereupon persuading them to give bountifully to Corban, that is, the common treasury for the temple ; some part of which was employed for their maintenance. Whence we learn, That it is no new thing for designing hypocrites to cover the foulest transgressions with the cloak of religion : thus the Pharisees made their prayers a cloak and cover for their covetousness.

## CHAP. XXI.

AND he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And he saw also a certain poor widow, casting in thither two mites. 3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast in more than they all : 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God : but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

At the door of the temple, through which all the people passed in and out, who came up three times a year at the solemn feasts, to worship Almighty God in his own house, there was a chest set, (like the poor man's box in some of our churches,) into which all persons cast their free-will offerings and oblations, which were employed either for the use of the poor, or for the service of the temple ; and what was thus given, our Saviour calls an offering to God, ver. 4. *These of their abundance have cast in unto the offerings of God.* Thence learn, That what we rightly give to the relief of the poor, or for the service and towards the support of God's public worship, is consecrated to God, and as such is accepted of him, and ought to be esteemed by us. Observe, 2. With what pleasure and satisfaction our Saviour sets himself to view those offerings, *He beheld the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.* Thence note, That our Saviour sees with pleasure, and beholds with delight, whatever we have hearts to give unto him ; whether for the relief of his members, or for the support of his service. O blessed Saviour, while now thou sittest at

thy Father's right hand in glory, thou seest every hand that is stretched forth to the relief of thy poor members here on earth. Ver. 2. *But a certain poor widow cast in two mites.* Several circumstances relating both to the person and the action are here observable: as, 1. The person that offered was a widow: the married woman is under the careful provision of her husband; if she spends, he earns; but the widow has no hands but her own to work for her. 2. She was a *poor widow*; poverty added to the sorrow of her widowhood; she had no rich jointure to live upon; it is some alleviation of the sorrow that attends widowhood, when the hand is left full, though the bed be left empty: this widow was needy and desolate, but yet gives; some in her circumstances would have looked upon themselves as having a right to receive what was given by others, rather than give any thing themselves. Observe, 3. Her bounty and munificence in giving; *her two mites* are proclaimed by Christ to be *more than all the rich men's talents*: more in respect to the mind and affection of the giver: more with respect to the proportion of the gift; a mite to her being more than pounds to others. Pounds were little to them; two mites were all to her, she leaves herself nothing; so that the poor woman gave not only more than any of them all, but more than they all. Christ's eye looked at once into the bottom of her purse, and into the bottom of her heart, and judged of the offering, rather by the mind of the giver than by the value of the gift. From this instance we learn, 1. That the poorer, yea the poorest sort of people, are not exempted from good works; but even they must and ought to exercise charity according to their ability. This poor widow, that had not a pound, nay, not a penny, presents God with a farthing. 2. That in all works of pious charity which we perform, God looks at the heart, the will, and the affection of the giver, more than at the largeness and liberality of the gift. It is not said, The Lord loveth a *liberal* giver, but a *cheerful* giver; *He accepteth the gift according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* O our God! the poorest of us thy servants have our two mites also, a soul and a body; persuade and enable us to offer them both unto thee: though they are thine already, yet thou wilt graciously accept them; and O how happy shall we be in thy acceptance!

5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, *6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.*

Our blessed Saviour being now ready to depart from the temple, never more after this entering into it, and his disciples showing him, with wonder and admiration, the magnificent structures and buildings thereof, apprehending that in regard of its invincible strength it could not be destroyed; not considering, that sin will undermine and blow up the most magnificent and famous structures; for sin brings cities and kingdoms, as well as particular persons, to their end. *Not one stone,* says Christ, *shall be left upon another;* which threatening was exactly fulfilled after Christ's death, when Titus the Roman emperor destroyed the city, burnt the temple, and Turnus Rufus, the general of his army, plowed up the very foundation on which the temple stood: thus was the threatening of God fulfilled, *Jer. xxvi. 18. Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become an heap.* Learn hence, 1. That sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms; Jerusalem, the glory of the world, is here by sin threatened to be made a desolation. 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever appearing improbabilities there may be to the contrary. 'Tis neither the temple's strength nor beauty that can oppose or withstand God's power.

7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign *will there be* when these things shall come to pass?

A double question is here propounded to our Saviour: namely, when the destruction of Jerusalem should be? and what would be the signs of it? From whence learn, What an itching curiosity there is in the best of men, to know futurities, and to understand things that shall come to pass hereafter; and when that hereafter will come to pass. O how happy were it if we were as forward to obey the declaration of God's revealed will, as we are to pry into the hid-

den counsels of his secret will : *Tell us, say the disciples, when shall these things be ?*

8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived : for many shall come in my name, saying, *I am Christ ;* and the time draweth near : go ye not therefore after them. 9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified : for these things must first come to pass ; but the end is not by and by. 10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : 11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences ; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

Observe here, Christ does not gratify his disciples' curiosity, but acquaints them with their present duty ; namely, to watch against deceivers and seducers, who should have the impudence to affirm themselves to be Christ, *saying, I am Christ :* some Christs personal, or the Messias ; others Christs doctrinal, affirming their erroneous opinions to be Christ's mind and doctrine : *Take heed that ye be not deceived, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ.* Observe farther, The signs which our Saviour gives of Jerusalem's approaching destruction, namely, the many broils and commotions, the civil disorders and dissensions, that should be found among the Jews immediately before : *Ye shall hear of wars and commotions,* and see fearful sights, and great signs from heaven. Josephus declares, that there appeared in the air chariots and horsemen skirmishing, and that a blazing star in fashion of a sword hung over the city for a year together. Hence learn, That war, pestilence, and famine, are judgments and calamities inflicted by God upon a sinful people for their contempt of Christ and gospel grace. *Ye shall hear of war, famine, and pestilence.*

12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. 13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14 Settle it therefore in your hearts,

not to meditate before what ye shall answer : 15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. 16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends ; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. 18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish, 19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

Our Saviour here goes on in giving farther signs of Jerusalem's destruction. He declares, 1. The sharp persecution that should fall upon the apostles themselves, *They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you.* Learn thence, That the keenest and sharpest edge of persecution is usually turned upon the ambassadors of Christ, and falls heaviest on the ministers of God. He acquaints them, 2. That for preaching his holy doctrine, they should be brought before kings and rulers ; but advises them not to be anxiously thoughtful, or exceedingly solicitous what they should say, for it should be suggested to them by the Holy Ghost, what they should say in that hour. Learn thence, That though the truth of Christ may be opposed, yet the defenders of it shall never be ashamed ; for rather than they shall want a tongue to plead for it, God himself will prompt them by his Holy Spirit, and suggest such arguments to them, as all their enemies shall not be able to gainsay : *I will give you a mouth and wisdom.* Observe, 3. How he describes the bitter enmity of the world against the preachers of the gospel, to be such as would overcome and extinguish even the natural affection of nearest relations : *Ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren.* Grace teacheth us to lay down our lives for the brethren ; but corruption in general, and enmity to the gospel in particular, will put brother upon taking away the life of brother, and cause parents to hate and persecute their own bowels. Observe lastly, Our Saviour's admonition : *In your patience possess ye your souls.* There are three degrees of Christian patience : the first consists in a silent submission to God's will ; the second in a thankful acceptance of

God's fatherly rod; the third in serious cheerfulness under sorrowful dispensations, rejoicing in tribulation, and counting it all joy when we fall into divers temptations: by this patience we possess our souls; as faith gives us the possession of Christ, so patience gives us the possession of ourselves: an impatient man is not in his own hand; for what title soever we have to our own souls, we have no possession of them without patience: *In your patience possess ye your souls.*

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21 Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity: the sea, and the waves roaring; 26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

The sense is this: "As soon as ye shall see the Roman army appear before the city of Jerusalem, (called by St. Matthew and St. Mark, *The abomination of desolation*,

that is, the army which is such an abomination to you, and the occasion of such desolation wherever it goes,) then let every one that values his own safety fly as far and as fast as he can, as Lot fled from the flames of Sodom: and be glad, if by flight he can save his life, though he lose all besides." Learn thence, That when Almighty God is pouring forth his fury upon a sinful people, it is both a lawful and necessary duty, by flight to endeavour to shelter ourselves from the approaching calamity and desolation: *When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, flee to the mountains.* Observe farther, The dreadful relation that our Saviour here gives of those desolating calamities which were coming upon Jerusalem, partly from the Roman army without, and partly from the seditious and factions of the Zealots within, who committed such outrages and slaughters, that there were no less than eleven hundred thousand Jews slain, and ninety-seven thousand taken prisoners. They that bought our Saviour for thirty pence, were now themselves sold thirty for a penny. Now did the temple itself become a sacrifice, a whole burnt-offering, and was consumed to ashes. Observe lastly, What encouragement Christ gives to all his faithful disciples and followers: he bids them look up, and lift up their heads, when these calamities came upon others; look up with confidence and joy, for your redemption, salvation, and deliverance, then approacheth. God had a remnant, which he designed should survive that destruction, to be an holy seed; these are called upon to look up with cheerfulness and joy, when the hearts of others were failing them for fear. And thus shall it be at the general day of judgment, (of which Jerusalem's visitation was a type.) Lord! how will the glory and terror of that day dazzle the eyes, and terrify the hearts, of all the enemies of Christ; but delight the eyes and rejoice the hearts of all that love and fear him, that serve and obey him: then may the friends of Christ *look up, and lift up their heads, for their full redemption draweth nigh.*

29 And he spake to them a parable: Behold, the fig-tree, and all the trees; 30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own-selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31 So likewise ye, when

ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. 32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. 33 Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but my words shall not pass away.

In these words our Saviour declares the certainty of his coming to visit Jerusalem for all her barbarous and bloody cruelty towards himself, his prophets, and apostles ; he is pleased to set forth this by the similitude of the fig-tree, whose beginning to bud declares the summer at hand ; thus our Saviour tells them, that when they should see the fore-mentioned signs, they might conclude the destruction of their city and temple to be near at hand ; and accordingly some of that generation, then living, did see these predictions fulfilled. Learn, That God is no less punctual in the execution of his threatenings upon incorrigible sinners, than he is faithful in the performance of his promises towards his own people : the truth and veracity of God is as much concerned to execute his threatenings, as it is to fulfil his promises.

34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you un-awares. 35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Here our Lord cautions his disciples against such a distemper and indisposition of mind, as may render them unfit and unready for his coming and appearance ; and to take heed of two dangerous sins, namely, voluptuousness and earthly-mindedness, which above any other sins will indispose us for the duty of watchfulness. There is a three-fold reason why our Saviour forewarns us of these sins, with reference to the day of judgment ; 1. Because they are *peccata præcurrentia*, certain prognostics of the day of judgment approaching : *As it was in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.* 2. Because

they are *peccata accelerantia*, they do not only foretell, but hasten the coming of Christ, To see the world drowned in voluptuousness and earthly-mindedness, in security and sensuality, is not only a sign to foretell, but a sin that hastens judgment, and pulls down vengeance upon a wicked world. 3. Christ bids us beware of these sins with reference to, the day of judgment, because these sins are *derisoria judicis*, they beget in men a profane spirit of scoffing and deriding at the notices of Christ's appearing to judgment, 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. *In the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming ?* Our Saviour having thus warned them of these sins, he next exhorts them to watchfulness ; *Watch ye, therefore, for as a snare that day will come upon you ;* that is, very suddenly, and very unexpectedly : a snare has a threefold property, to catch suddenly, to hold sure, to destroy certainly. Our Lord's coming to Jerusalem was very unexpected, and his coming to us by death and judgment will steal upon us if we are not watchful. Watch ye then, for our Lord will come ; at what hour he will come cannot certainly be known ; there is no time in which we can promise or assure ourselves, that our Lord will not come ; the time of our whole life is little enough to prepare for his coming. Our preparation for, will be no acceleration or hastening of, our Lord's coming. And oh ! how dreadful will his coming be, if we be found off our watch, and altogether unready for his appearance : Appear we must in judgment, but shall not be able to stand in the judgment ; see Christ we shall as a judge, but not behold him as a redeemer.

37 And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called *the mount of Olives*. 38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Our Lord had exhorted his disciples in the foregoing verses to diligence and prayer ; here he sets an example of both before them. Busying himself in God's service all the day, and at night spending much time in prayer ; in the day-time he was in the temple preaching, in the evening he was on the mount of Olives praying. Lord ! what an example of indefatigable



zeal and diligence hast thou set before thy ministers and members! O that when our Master comes, we may be found working, our people watching, and both they and we waiting for the joyful coming of our Lord and Saviour! Amen.

### CHAP. XXII.

**N**OW the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover. 2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

This chapter gives a sad and sorrowful relation of the chief priests' conspiracy against the life of our blessed Saviour, in which we have three particulars observable.

1. The persons making this conspiracy, *the chief priests, scribes, and elders*, that is, the whole Jewish Sanhedrim, or general council; they all lay their malicious heads together to contrive the destruction of the holy and innocent Jesus. Thence learn, That general councils have erred, and may err fundamentally, both in matters of doctrine and practice; so did this general council at Jerusalem, consisting of chief priests, doctors, and elders, with the high priest their president. They did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah, after all the miracles wrought before their eyes, but ignominiously put him to death. Observe, 2. The manner of this conspiracy against the life of our blessed Saviour, it was clandestine, secret, and subtle: *They consulted how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.* Learn thence, That Satan makes use of the subtilty of crafty men, and abuseth their parts as well as their power for his own purposes and designs: the devil never sends a fool on his errand. Observe, 3. The circumstance of time, when this conspiracy was managed, *At the feast of the passover.* It was a custom among the Jews to execute malefactors at their solemn feasts, at which time all the Jews came up to Jerusalem to sacrifice, and then put the malefactors to death, that all Israel might see and fear, and not do so wickedly. Accordingly the feast of the passover was waited for by the Jews as a fit opportunity to put our Saviour to death. The only objection was, That it might occasion a tumult and uproar amongst the people, there being such a mighty concourse at that time in Jerusalem; but Judas making them

a proffer, they readily comply with the motion, and resolve to take the first opportunity to put our Saviour to death.

3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. 4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. 5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. 6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

Observe here, 1. The person betraying our blessed Saviour, *Judas*; Judas a professor, Judas a preacher, Judas an apostle, and one of the twelve, whom Christ had chosen out of the world to be his dearest friend, one of his family and household: shall we wonder to find friends unfriendly or unfaithful to us, when our Saviour had a traitor in his own family? Observe, 2. The heinous nature of Judas' sin: he betrayed Jesus; Jesus his Maker, Jesus his Master. It is no strange or uncommon thing for the vilest of sins, and the most horrid impieties, to be acted by such persons as make the most eminent profession of holiness and religion. Observe, 3. What was the occasion that led Judas to the commission of this sin; it was his inordinate love of money. I do not find that Judas had any particular malice, spite, or ill-will against our Saviour; but a base and unworthy spirit of covetousness possessed him, and this made him sell his master. Covetousness is the root of sin; an eager and insatiable thirst after the world is the parent of the most monstrous and unnatural sins, for which reason our Saviour doubles his caution, *Luke 12. 15. Take heed and beware of covetousness*; it shows us both the great danger of the sin, and the great care that we ought to take to preserve ourselves from it.

7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing

a pitcher of water : follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11 And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ? 12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished : there make ready. 13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them : and they made ready the passover.

The time for the celebration of the passover being now at hand, Christ sends two of his disciples, Peter and John, to Jerusalem, to prepare what was needful in order thereunto ; and here we have observable ; 1. An eminent proof and evidence of Christ's divinity, in foretelling his disciples all the particular occurrences and circumstances which they should meet with in the city ; as, *a man bearing a pitcher of water, &c.* Observe, 2. How readily the heart of the householder was disposed to receive our Saviour and his disciples, and to accommodate them with all things needful upon this occasion. Our blessed Saviour had not a lamb of his own, and peradventure no money wherewith to purchase one ; yet he finds a more agreeable accommodation in this poor man's house, than if he had dwelt in Abab's ivory palace, and had the provisions of Solomon's table. When Christ has a passover to celebrate, he will dispose the hearts of his children and servants to a free reception of himself. The room that Christ will enter into must be a large room, an upper room, a room furnished and prepared : *a large room*, is the emblem of an enlarged heart, enlarged with love, with joy and thankfulness ; *an upper room*, is an heart exalted, not puffed up with pride, but lifted up by heavenly meditations ; and *a room furnished*, is a soul adorned with all the graces of the Holy Spirit : into such an heart doth Christ enter, and there delights to dwell : *Here is my rest for ever*, says Christ ; *here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.*

14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer : 16 For I say unto you, I

will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. 17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me. 20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. 21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. 22 And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined : but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed ! 23 And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

Observe here, 1. What ardency of desire, and vehemency of affection our holy Lord expresses, to celebrate the passover with his disciples, and to administer the sacramental supper to them before he left them : *With desire have I desired to eat with you before I suffer.* Thence learn, That it is very necessary, when sufferings do appear, especially when death doth approach, to have immediate recourse to the table of the Lord, which affords both an antidote against fear, and is a restorative to our faith. Christ, the night before he suffered, communicated with his disciples. Observe, 2. The unexampled boldness of the impudent traitor Judas ; though he had sold his Master, he presumes to sit down at the table with him, and with the other disciples : had the presence of Judas polluted this ordinance to any but himself, doubtless our Saviour would not have suffered him to approach unto it. It teaches us, That although nothing be more ordinary than for unholy persons to press into the holy ordinances of God which they have no right (whilst such) to approach unto, yet their presence pollutes the ordinances only to themselves. Holy persons are not polluted by their sins, therefore ought not to be discouraged from coming, by their presence. Observe, 3. Christ did not name Judas ;

and say, O thou perfidious traitor ; but, *Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.* Doubtless Christ did not name him, because he would not drive him to despair, but draw him to repentance. But, Lord, thou knowest us when thou namest us not. O how sad is it for any of thy family, who pretend friendship with thee, to conspire against thee ; and after they have eat of thy bread, to lift up the heel against thee ! Observe, 4. That though Judas was not named, yet he saw himself pointed at by our Saviour : *Behold the hand that betrayeth me is on the table ;* and Judas' heart told him whose hand that was ; yea, though Judas heard that dreadful sentence denounced against him, *Woe to the man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ;* yet he is no more blanked than innocency itself : this shameless man had the impudence to say to our blessed Saviour, *Master, is it I ?* though St. Luke says it not, the other Evangelists tell us, that Christ answered him, *Thou sayest it.* Did not Judas (think we) blush extremely, and hang down his guilty head, at so galling an intimation ? Nothing less ; we read not of any thing like it. Lord ! how does obstinacy in sinning steel the brow, and render it incapable of all relenting impressions ! Immediately after the celebration of the passover, followed the institution of the Lord's supper ; where we have observable, The author, the time, the elements, and the ministerial actions. Observe, 1. The author of this new sacrament, *Jesus took bread.* Learn thence, That to institute a sacrament is the sole prerogative of Jesus Christ ; the church has no power to make new sacraments ; it is only her duty to celebrate those which our Saviour has made. 2. The time of the institution, the night before the passion : *The night in which he was betrayed, he took bread.* 3. The sacramental elements, *bread and wine ;* bread representing the body, and wine the blood of our Redeemer : bread being an absolutely necessary food, a common and obvious food, a strengthening and refreshing food ; and wine being the most excellent drink ; the most pleasant and delightful, the most cordial and restorative ; for these reasons amongst others, did Christ consecrate and set these creatures apart for those holy purposes for which he designed them. 4. The ministerial actions, breaking of the bread and blessing of the cup : *Jesus took bread ;* that is, separated it, and set it

apart from common use, for holy purposes : *He blessed it,* that is, he prayed for a blessing upon it, and *broke it,* thereby shadowing forth his body broken upon the cross : and *he gave it to his disciples,* saying, This broken bread signifies my body, which is suddenly to be broken upon the cross, for the redemption and salvation of a lost world, *Do you likewise this in remembrance of my death.* As to the cup, Christ having set it apart by prayer and thanksgiving, he commands his disciples to drink all of it ; For, says he, *this cup is the new testament in my blood ;* that is, the wine in this cup doth represent the shedding of my blood, by which the new covenant between God and man is ratified and confirmed. *Drink ye all of this,* says our Saviour : whence we gather, That every communicant has as undoubted a right to the cup, as he has to the bread in the Lord's supper ; therefore for the church of Rome to deny the cup to the common people is sacrilege, and directly contrary to Christ's institution.

24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them ; and they that exercise authority upon them are called Benefactors. 26 But ye *shall not be so* : but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger ; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth ? is not he that sitteth at meat ? but I am among you as he that serveth.

If these words be not placed out of order by St. Luke here, it may seem very strange, that the apostles, immediately after the receiving the sacrament, should entertain their minds with thoughts of precedence and superiority ; and much stranger yet, that they should discourse openly of such a subject as this, especially considering what our Saviour had just before told them, that *he was betrayed into the hands of sinners.* But whether at this time or not, it is most certain, at some time or other a strife was found amongst them, *which should be the greatest.* Now that our Saviour might effectually quench those unhappy sparks of ambition which were kindled in his apos-

theirs' minds, he tells them that supremacy and dominion belong to secular princes, not to evangelical pastors, who ought to carry themselves with humility and condescension one towards another. Not that Christ directs to a parity and equality amongst his ministers, or forbids the pre-eminency of some over others; but the affecting of superiority, and the love of pre-eminency, is that which our Saviour disalloweth. Learn,

1. That so far ought the ministers of Christ to be from affecting a domination and superiority of power over their fellow-brethren, that, in imitation of Christ their Lord and Master, they ought to account themselves fellow-servants: *I am among you as one that serveth.* 2. That such ministers as do love and affect pre-eminency and superiority, are most unfit for it, and they deserve it best that seek it least. 3. That the dignity and honour which the ministers of Christ should chiefly and only affect, is in another world; and the way to be the greatest and highest there, is to be low and humble here; mean in our own eyes, and little in our own esteem: *Whosoever is chief, says Christ, let him be your servant.*

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: 29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Observe here, What an honourable acknowledgment Christ makes of the constancy of his disciples' love and affection towards him: *Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations;* that is, in my afflictions, trials, and sufferings. It is an easy matter to abide with Christ in days of peace, in times of consolation; but when we are under afflictions, temptations, and troubles, then to abide and keep close to Christ, this is the proof of love and friendship: and as Christ makes an honourable mention of their constancy towards him, so he presently assures them of an honourable reward: *I appoint unto you a kingdom.* Learn thence, That such as are sharers with Christ in his sufferings, shall certainly communicate with him in his glory: *If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.* And whereas our Saviour promises his apostles to sit upon

*thrones with him judging the twelve tribes of Israel;* we may gather, That such ministers as do most service for Christ, and forsake most to follow him, and continue in temptation and tribulation with him, shall in his kingdom partake of most honour and dignity with him and from him: *You shall eat and drink in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel:* possibly the apostles, and all the zealous, faithful and laborious ministers of Jesus Christ, shall be nearer his throne in heaven, than either saints or angels; nearer than the angels, because by Christ's assuming the human nature, they are more nearly allied to him; he is their friend, but our brother; and nearer than other saints, as having done more eminent service for Christ, and brought more honour and glory to him by a laborious diligence in their place and station, Dan. xii. 3. *They that turn many to righteousness shall shine, &c.*

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Here I shall give, 1. The general sense of the words. 2. The particular matters contained in them. 3. The special observation from them. The sense of the words is this; as for you my disciples in general, and for thee Peter in particular, I must tell thee, that Satan hath accused you all before God, and desires that he may have the sifting of you all by his winnowing winds of temptation and persecution, that he may shake your faith, and weaken your confidence; but I have prayed for you all, and particularly for thyself who art in greatest danger of falling, because so confident of thine own strength and standing, that thy faith, though severely shaken, may not utterly fail; and when by repentance thou art recovered from thy fall, be careful to confirm and strengthen others, that they fall not in like manner. The particular matters contained in these words, are these; a christian's danger, a christian's safety, and a christian's duty. 1. A christian's danger, *Satan hath desired to sift you.* Where observe, 1. The person particularly warned of the danger, *Simon, Simon;* the doubling of the word, doubtless, carries a

special intimation with it: it denotes the greatness and nearness of Peter's danger, his own security and insensibleness of that danger, and the great affection of Christ his monitor, to give him warning of his danger. Observe, 2. The warning itself, and that is, of a devilish conspiracy against himself and all the apostles, *Satan hath desired to have you*; to have you for his own, if it might be; to have you as believers, rather than other men; to have you as eminent believers, rather than other christians; and to have you as apostles and ministers, rather than other eminent believers. And as Satan has desired to have you, so to *sift you too, to winnow you as wheat*; not to fetch out the chaff, but to make the chaff. Here note, That Satan has his winnowing winds of temptation, and his tempestuous winds of persecution, for the sifting of God's children. Note farther, That it is the wheat, the good corn, that Satan winnows; not chaff, nor dross; sinners, that are all chaff, and nothing but dross, Satan will not be at the pains to sift and winnow them. But what is this sifting? *Answer*, In sifting, two things are performed; 1. The agitation, shaking and tossing of the corn from side to side. The separation of the corn from the chaff and dust; Satan intends the former, God effects the latter: *Cribratione non perditur, sed purgatur frumentum*; *The corn is improved, not impaired, by winnowing*. The saints of God shall be no losers in the end by Satan's temptations, how many and strong soever they may be in the way. Observe, 2. The christian's safety: *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*. Where note, 1. The care that Christ had of Peter, and in him of all believers: *I have prayed for thee*; for thee as a believing christian, and for thee as a tempted christian; and 'tis not said, *I will pray for thee*, but *I have prayed for thee*. Christ prayed for Peter, before Peter understood that he had need of Christ's prayer; Christ prayed for Peter as soon as ever Satan desired to sift Peter. Our Intercessor is full as nimble and speedy in his suit for us, as Satan is in his accusations against us; he has desired, but *I have prayed*; he is a potent assailant, but thou hast a powerful assistant. Observe, 2. The subject matter prayed for, *That thy faith fail not*; not that thy faith be not assaulted, not that thy faith be not shaken, but that thy faith may not fail by an absolute and total deficiency. The third particular is the chris-

tian's duty: *When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren*. When converted; that is, when recovered from thy fall, when restored upon thy repentance to the divine favour. This conversion is not from a state of sin; Peter was so converted before; but it was from an act of sin, into which he should lapse and relapse; *Strengthen thy brethren*; that is, establish others in the faith, from which thou art shamefully fallen thyself. Now the lessons of instruction from the whole are these: 1. That temptations are like siftings: God sifts to purge away our dust and dross; Satan sifts, not to get out the chaff; but to bolt out the flour; his temptations are levelled against our faith. 2. That Satan has a continual desire to be sifting and winnowing God's flour; Satan's own children are all bran, all chaff, these he sifts not: God's children have flour mixed with bran, good wheat mixed with chaff; these he desires to sift, winnow, and fan; not to separate the bran and dross, but to destroy the flour. Learn, 3. That the intercession of Christ gives security, satisfaction, and encouragement to all believers, that though their faith may, by temptations, be shaken and assaulted, yet, that it shall never be finally vanquished and overcome: *I have prayed that thy faith fail not*. 4. That lapsed christians, when recovered and restored, ought to endeavour to restore and to recover, to strengthen and establish others: *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. 34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

St. Peter's resolution to accompany Christ both to prison and to death, was holy and good; but his too confident opinion of his own strength and ability so to do, without a divine aid and assistance, was his failing and infirmity. Self-confidence is a sin too incident to the holiest and best of men. Little did St. Peter think what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if once God left him to himself, and to Satan's assaults. Learn farther, How hard a matter it is for a christian to excel in gifts, and not to be over-confident and conceited. To see a man eminent in gifts,

and yet exemplary in humility, is a rare sight; if we stand in the evil day, 'tis an humble fear of falling that must enable us to stand.

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. 36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. 37 For I say unto you, That this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. 38 And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

As if our Lord had said, "Hitherto I have been with you, and you have had my special protection and careful provision, though you went without purse, scrip, or sword: but the time is now at hand when I must leave you; when your friends will be few, and your enemies many; therefore make such provision for yourselves, as prudence shall direct. Indeed, my sufferings will be first; I must be numbered with the transgressors, and all things that are written of me must be accomplished, and will suddenly be fulfilled; and after me you will next come upon the stage, therefore prepare and provide for it." Learn, That Christ having forewarned his members, but especially his ministers, of the dangers, distresses, and difficulties that they are to conflict and encounter with; it is their duty, by faith and patience, with courage and christian resolution, to be well armed and prepared against them.

39 And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. 40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. 41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, 42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing,

remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. 43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

Our blessed Saviour being now come to the mount of Olives, and having entered with his disciples into the garden near it, whither he used to retire and pray; in this place he falls into a bitter and bloody agony, in which he prayed with wonderful fervour and importunity; his sufferings were now coming on a great pace, and he meets them upon his knees, and would be found in a praying posture. Learn thence, that prayer is the best preparative for, as well as the most powerful support under, the heaviest sufferings that can befall us. As to this prayer of our Saviour, in his agony, many particulars are very observable. As, 1. The time when he prayed thus extraordinarily; it was the evening before he suffered, just before Judas with his black guard came to apprehend him; and when he did come, he found him in a praying posture; our Lord teaching us by his example, that when imminent dangers are before us, especially when death is apprehended by us, it is our duty to be very much in prayer to God, and very fervent in our wrestlings with him. Observe, 2. The subject matter of our Lord's prayer, *That, if possible, the cup might pass from him*; that is, that he might escape the dreadful wrath, at which he was so sore amazed. But what! did Christ now begin to repent of his undertaking for sinners? did he shrink and give back, when he came to the pinch? No, nothing like this; but as he had two natures, being God and Man, so he had two distinct wills; as God-man he feared and shunned death, as God-man he willingly submitted to it. The divine nature and the human spirit of Christ did now assault each other with disagreeing interests. Again, this prayer was not absolute, but conditional: "Father, if it may be, if thou

wilt, if it please thee, let the cup pass; if not, I will drink it." The cup of sufferings we see is a very bitter and distasteful cup, a cup which human nature abhors; yet doth God oftentimes put this bitter cup of affliction into the hands of whom he does sincerely love; and when he doth so, it is their duty to drink it with silence and submission, as here their Lord did before them. Observe, 3. The manner of our Lord's prayer in this his agony; and here we may remark, 1. It was a solitary prayer; he went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples. The company of our best and dearest friends is not always seasonable; there are times and seasons when a christian would not be willing that the most intimate friend he has in the world should be with him, to hear what passes in secret betwixt him and his God. Again, 2. It was an humble prayer; that appears by the postures in which he cast himself, sometimes kneeling, sometimes lying prostrate upon his face, he lies in the very dust, and lower he could not lie, and his heart was as low as his body. 3. It was a vehement, fervent, and importunate prayer; such was the fervour of his spirit, that he prayed himself into an agony. O let us blush to think how unlike our praying frame of spirit is to Christ's. Lord! what coldness, deadness, drowsiness, formality, and laziness, is found in our prayers! How often do our lips move, when our hearts stand still! Observe, 4. The posture which the disciples were found in; when our Lord was praying in his agony, they were fast asleep. Good God! could they possibly sleep at such a time as this? when Christ's soul was exceeding sorrowful, could their eyes be heavy? Learn thence, That the very best of Christ's disciples may be, and oftentimes are, overtaken with great infirmities, when the most important duties are performing; *Then cometh he to his disciples, and findeth them sleeping.* Observe, 5. The mild, meek, and gentle rebuke which he gives to his disciples for their sleeping; he said unto them, *Why sleep ye? Could ye not watch with me one hour?* "What, not watch when your Master was in such danger! Could ye not watch with me, when I was going to lay down my life for you? What, not one hour, and that the parting hour too?" Learn hence, That the holiest and best resolved christians, who have willing spirits for Christ and his service, yet in regard to the weakness of the flesh, and the frailty

of human nature, it is their duty to watch and pray, and thereby guard themselves against temptations: *Rise and pray, lest ye enter into, &c.*

47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? 49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? 50 And one of them smote the servant of the high-priest, and cut off his right ear. 51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 52 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

It was the lot and portion of our blessed Saviour here, we find, to be betrayed into the hands of his mortal enemies, by the treachery of a false and dissembling friend: and in this sad relation before us we have observable, The traitor, the treason, the manner how, and the time when, this treasonable design was executed. Observe, 1. The traitor, *Judas*: all the evangelists carefully describe him by his name, *Judas, Judas Iscariot*, lest he should be mistaken for Jude, the brother of James; and by his office, one of the twelve. Lord! now ought the greatest professors to look well to themselves, and to the grounds and principles of their profession: for a profession begun in hypocrisy will certainly end in apostasy. Observe, 2. The occasion of the treason, covetousness, or the inordinate love of worldly wealth; and accordingly the devil lays a temptation before him exactly suited to his temper and inclination, and it instantly overcame him. Learn hence, That persons are never in such imminent danger of falling into sin, as when they meet with temptations exactly suited

to their master lust. O pray we, that God would keep us from temptations suited to our predominant lust and corruption. Observe, 3. The treason of Judas, he led on an armed multitude to the place where Christ was, gave them a signal to discover him by, and bids them *lay hands upon him and hold him fast*; which treason of Judas was attended with these black and hellish aggravations: he had been a witness of our Saviour's miracles, and hearer of our Lord's doctrine; what he did was not by solicitation; the chief priests did not send to him, but *he went to them*. Lord! how dangerous is it to allow ourselves in any secret sin! None can say how far that one sin may in time lead us. Should any one have told Judas that his covetousness would at last make him deny his Lord, and sell his Saviour, he would have said with Hazeel, *Is thy servant a dog, that I should do this thing?* Observe, 4. The endeavour made by his disciples for their Master's rescue. *One of them* (St Matthew says it was Peter) *drew a sword, and cut off the ear of Malchus*. But why not the ear of Judas rather? Because, though Judas was most faulty, yet Malchus might be most forward to arrest and carry off our Saviour. O how does a pious breast boil with indignation at the sight of an open affront offered to its Saviour! Yet, though St. Peter's heart was sincere, his hand was too rash; good intentions are no warrant for irregular actions; and accordingly, Christ, who accepted the affection, reprov'd the action. To resist authority, even in Christ's own defence, is rash zeal, and discountenanced by the gospel. Peter did well to ask his master, *If he should smite with the sword?* but he ought to have stayed his hand till Christ had given him his answer. However, Peter's sin occasioned a miracle from our Saviour; Christ heals that ear miraculously, which Peter cut off unwarrantably; yet the sight of this miracle converted none. O how insufficient are all outward means of conversion, without the Spirit's inward operation!

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high-priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. 56

But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. 59 And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean. 60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61 And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

This paragraph of the chapter gives us an account of the fall and rising of Peter; of his sin in denying his Master, and of his recovery by repentance; both must be considered distinctly. First, touching his sin and fall; there are four particulars observable relating thereunto; namely, the sin itself, the occasion of that sin, the reiteration and repetition of it, and the aggravating circumstances attending it. Observe, 1. The sin itself, the denial of Christ Jesus his Lord and Master, *I know not the man*; and this backed with an oath, he swore that he knew him not. Lord, how may the slavish fear of suffering drive the holiest and best of men to commit the foulest and worst of sins! Observe, 2. The occasions leading to this sin, and they were these: 1. His *following Christ afar off*. To follow Christ was the effect of Peter's faith; but to follow him afar off at this time, was the fruit of fear, and the effect of frailty. Woe unto us when temptation comes, if we be far from Christ's gracious presence and assistance. 2. His being in bad company, amongst Christ enemies: would we escape temptations to sin, we must then decline such company as would allure and draw us into sin. Peter had better have been a cold by himself alone, than warming himself at a fire which was encompassed in with the blasphemies of the multitude; where his conscience, though not seared,



was yet made hard. Another grand occasion of Peter's falling was, a presumptuous confidence of his own strength and standing: *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.* O Lord! to presume upon ourselves, is the ready way to provoke thee to leave us to ourselves; if ever we stand in the day of trial, 'tis the fear of falling must enable us to stand. We soon fall, if we believe it impossible to fall. Observe, 3. The reiteration and repetition of this sin, he denied Christ again and again; he denies him first with a lie, then with an oath, and next with a curse. Lord, how dangerous is it not to resist the first beginnings of sin! if we yield to one temptation, Satan will assault us with more and stronger. Peter proceeded from a denial to a lie; from a lie to an oath; from an oath to an imprecation and curse. It is our wisdom vigorously to resist sin at the beginning; for then we have most power, and sin has least. Observe, 4. The heinous and aggravating circumstances of St. Peter's sin; and they are these: 1. The character of his person; a disciple, an apostle, a chief apostle, a special favourite, who with James and John had the special honour to be with Christ at his transfiguration: yet he denies Christ. 2. The person whom he denies; *his Master*, his Saviour, and Redeemer. He, that in great humility had washed Peter's feet, had eat the passover with Peter, had given but just before the holy sacrament to Peter; yet is this kind and condescending Saviour denied by Peter. 3. Consider the persons before whom he denied Christ; the chief priest's servants. O how surprising, and yet very pleasing was it to them, to see one disciple betray and sell his Master, and another disown and deny him! 4. Consider the time when he denied him; it was but a few hours after he had received the holy sacrament from Christ's own hands. How unreasonable then is their objection against coming to the Lord's table, that some who go to it dishonour Christ as soon as they come from it: such examples ought not to discourage us from coming to the ordinance, but should excite and increase our watchfulness after we have been there, that our after-deportment may be suitable to the solemnity of a sacramental table. Observe, 5. What a small temptation he lay under thus shamefully to deny his Lord and Master; a damsel only at first spake to him. Had a band of armed soldiers appeared to him, and ap-

prehended him: had he been bound and led away to the judgment-hall, and there threatened with the sentence of an ignominious death, some excuse might have been made better for him: but to disown his relation to Christ upon a word spoken by a sorry maid that kept the door; the smallness of the temptation was an high aggravation of the crime. Ah Peter: how little didst thou answer thy name at this time! Thou art not now a rock, but a reed, a pillar blown down by a woman's breath. O frail humanity, whose strength is weakness and infirmity. Note here, That in most of the saints' falls recorded in scripture, the first enticers to sin, or the accidental occasions of it, were women; witness (besides the first fall, that of Adam's where the woman was first in the transgression) the fall of Lot, Samson, David, Solomon, and Peter; these are sad instances of the truth of what I speak. A weak creature may be a strong tempter; nothing is too impotent or useless for the devil's service; it was a great aggravation of Peter's sin, that the voice of a poor maid that kept the door should be of more force to overcome him, than his faith in Jesus to sustain him. But what shall we say? small things are sufficient to cast us down, if God doth not help us up; we sink under any burden, if God sustain us not; and yield to the least temptation, if he leaves us to ourselves; a damsel shall then make a disciple shrink, and a door-keeper shall be able to drive an apostle before her. This is the account, in short, of St. Peter's fall, considered in itself, and with the circumstances relating to it. Now follows his recovery and rising again by repentance; and here we have observable, The suddenness of his repentance, the means of his repentance, and the manner of his repentance. Observe, 1. The suddenness of St. Peter's repentance: as his sin was sad, so was his repentance speedy; sin committed by surprise, and through the prevalency of a temptation that suddenly assaults us, is much sooner repented of, than where the sin is presumptuous and deliberate. David's murder and adultery were deliberate acts of sin, in which he lay almost twelve months, without any solemn repentance for them. St. Peter's denial was hasty and sudden, under a violent pang and passion of fear, and he takes the warning of the cock's crowing, to go forth speedily and weep for his transgression. Observe, 2. The means of his repentance, which was two-fold: the less principal

means was the *crowing of the cock*; the more principal means were *Christ's looking upon Peter, and Peter's remembering the words of Christ*. 1. The less principal means of St. Peter's rising and recovery by repentance, was *the crowing of the cock*; as the voice of the maid occasioned him to sin, so the voice of the cock occasioned him to reflect. That God who always can work without means, can ever, when he pleases, work by weak and contemptible means, and open the mouth of a bird or a beast for the conversion of a man. But why does our Lord make use of the crowing of a cock, as a means of bringing St. Peter to repentance? There is ever some mystery in Christ's institutions and instruments; the cock was a preacher, to call St. Peter to his duty, there being something of emblem between a cock and a preacher; the preacher ought to have the wings of the cock, to rouse himself from drowsiness and security, and to awaken others to a sense of their duty; he must have the watchfulness of the cock, to be ever ready to discover and forewarn danger; he must have the voice of the cock, to cry aloud, to tell Israel of their sin, to terrify the roaring lion of hell, and make him tremble, as they say the natural lion does: in a word, he must observe the hours of the cock, to crow at all seasons; to preach the word in season and out of season. Again, 2. The more principal means of St. Peter's recovery were *Christ's looking upon Peter, and Peter's remembering the words of Christ*. 1. *Christ's looking upon Peter*: our Saviour looked upon Peter, before either Peter looked upon our Saviour or upon himself. O wonderful act of love and grace towards this fallen disciple. Christ was now upon his trial for his life, (a time when our thoughts would have been wholly taken up about ourselves,) but even then did Christ find leisure to think upon Peter, to remember his disconsolate disciple, to turn himself about and give him a pitiful but piercing look, even a look that melted and dissolved him into tears. We never begin to lament our sins till we are first lamented by our Saviour; *Jesus looked upon Peter*, that was the first more principal means of his repentance. But, 2. The other means was *Peter's remembering the words of the Lord, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me*. Now this remembrance was an applicative and feeling remembrance; he remembered the prediction of Christ, and applied it sensibly to himself; teaching us, that the

efficacy of Christ's word, in order to sound repentance, depends not upon the historical remembrance of it, but upon the close application of it to every man's conscience. Observe, 3. The manner of St. Peter's repentance; it was secret, it was sincere, it was lasting, and abiding. 1. It was secret; he went out and wept, *Vere dolet, qui sine teste dolet*; he sought a place of retirement, where he might mourn in secret; solitariness is most agreeable to an afflicted spirit; yet I must add, that as St. Peter's sorrow, so probably his shame, might cause him to go forth and weep. Christ looked upon him, and how ashamed must he be to look upon Christ, seeing he had so lately denied that he had ever seen him! 2. St. Peter's repentance was sincere; *he wept bitterly*: his grief was extraordinary, and his tears abundant; there is always a weeping that must follow sin; sin must cost the soul sorrow, either here or in hell; we must now either mourn awhile, or lament for ever. Doubtless St. Peter's tears were joined with hearty confession of sin to God, and smart reflections on himself, after this manner: "Lord, what have I done! I a disciple; I an apostle; I that did so lately acknowledge my master to be Christ the Lord; I that spoke with so much assurance, *Though all men deny thee yet will not I*: I that promised to lay down my life for his sake; yet have I denied him, yet have I, with oaths and imprecations, disowned him, and this at the voice of a damsel, not at the sight of a drawn sword presented at my breast! Lord, what weakness, what wickedness, what unfaithfulness, have I been guilty of! O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep all my days for the fault of this one night." Thus may we suppose our lapsed apostle to have bemoaned himself: and happy was it for him that he did so; for blessed are the tears of a converted revoler, and happy is the misery of a mourning offender. Observe, 3. St. Peter's repentance was not only secret and sincere, but lasting and abiding; he retained a very quick sense and lively remembrance of this sin upon his mind all his life after. Ecclesiastical history reports, that ever after, when St. Peter heard the crowing of the cock, he fell upon his knees and wept. Others say, that he was wont to rise at midnight and spend the time in prayer and humiliation between cock-crowing and day-light. And the Papists, who delight to turn every

thing into folly and superstition, first began that practice of setting up what we call weather-cocks upon towers and steeples, to put people in mind of St Peter's fall and repentance by that signal. Lastly, St. Peter's repentance was attended with an extraordinary zeal and forwardness for the service of Christ, to the end of his days. He had a burning love towards the holy Jesus ever after, which is now improved into a seraphic flame: *Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee*, says he himself, *John xxi. 17.* And as an evidence of it, he fed Christ's sheep; for in the Acts of the Apostles, we read of his extraordinary diligence to spread the gospel, and his travels in order thereunto, are computed by some to be nine hundred and fifty miles. To end all; have any of us fallen with Peter, though not with a formal abjuration, yet by a practical denying of him, let us go forth and weep with him, let us be more vigilant and watchful over ourselves for the time to come: let us express more fervent love and zeal for Christ, more diligence in his service, more concernedness for his honour and glory: this would be an happy improvement of this example; God grant it may have that blessed effect!

63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? 65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

Observe here, The vile affronts, the horrid abuses, the injuries and indignities, which were put upon the holy and innocent Jesus in the day of his sufferings: the rude officers and servants spit in his face, blindfolded his eyes, smote him with their hands, and, in contempt and scorn, bid him prophecy who it was that smote him. Verily, there is no degree of contempt, no mark of shame, no kind of suffering, which we ought to decline for Christ's sake, who hid not his face from shame and spitting upon our account.

66 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, 67 Saying, Art thou the

Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: 68 And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. 69 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. 70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. 71 And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

Observe here, 1. Christ was judged and tried before a court that had no authority to judge or try him, ver. 66. *They led him into their council.* This was their great Sanhedrim or ecclesiastical court, which, according to its first constitution, was to consist of seventy grave, honourable, and learned men, who were to judge impartially for God, according to *Numb. xi. 16.* But this, alas! consisted of a malicious pack of scribes and Pharisees; men full of malice and revenge, and over these Caiaphas now presided; an head fit for such a body. But though there was at our Saviour's trial a face of a court amongst them, yet their power was much abridged by the Romans, so that they could not bear nor determine, neither judge nor condemn, in capital matters. Observe next, The indictment of blasphemy is brought in against him: *What need we any further witness? we have heard his blasphemy.* Abominable wickedness! It is not in the power of the greatest and most unspotted innocence to protect from slander and false accusation. Observe farther, the great meekness of our Saviour under all these ill suggestions and false accusations: as a lamb before the shearers, so is he dumb, and openeth not his mouth. Learn thence, That to bear the revilings, contradictions, and false accusations of men, with a silent and submissive spirit, is an excellent and Christ-like temper. Though a trial for his innocent life was now managed most maliciously and illegally against him, yet *when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.* O may the same meek and humble mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus, who instead of reviling his accusers, prayed for his murderers, and offered up his blood to God on the behalf of them that shed it! Lord Jesus, help us to set thy instructive example continually before us, and to be daily

correcting and reforming of our lives by that blessed pattern. Amen.

## CHAP. XXIII.

**A**ND the whole multitude of them arose, and led them unto Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. 3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? and he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. 4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. 5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. 7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. 8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long *season*, because he had heard many things of him: and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. 12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

In this chapter we have a relation of the blackest and saddest tragedy that ever was acted upon the stage of the world, namely, the barbarous and bloody murder of the holy and innocent Jesus, by the Jews his own countrymen; the best of kings put to death by his own subjects. And the first

step towards it is his arraignment before Pilate and Herod; they post him from one to another; Pilate sends him to Herod, and Herod having made sufficient sport with him, remands him to Pilate: neither of them find any fault in him worthy of death, yet neither of them would release him. Here observe, That our Saviour being before Pilate, answers him readily and cautiously: *Art thou the King of the Jews?* says Pilate, *Thou sayest it*, says our Saviour. *Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* He replied, *I am*. Hence, says the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 13. *That Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession*. Teaching us, That though we may, and sometimes ought to hold our peace when our reputation is concerned, yet we must never be silent when the honour of God and his truth may be effectually promoted by a free and full confession; yet it is farther observable, That our Saviour being before Herod, would neither answer him to any question, nor work any miracle before him. This was an instance and an evidence of our Lord's great humility, in refusing to work miracles before Herod, who desired it only to gratify his curiosity. Thus do vile men abuse the holy power of God, desiring to see it exerted for admiration and pastime; not to be convinced or converted by it, but only to please their foolish fancy. And as admirable was the patience as the humility of Christ, and his present silence, who neither at Herod's request, nor at the Jews' importunity and false accusations, could be moved to answer any thing. Observe farther, That though Herod had murdered Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist, and our Saviour's own life was in danger by Herod heretofore, yet now he has him in his hands, he lets him go; only he first abuses him, and mocks him, and arrays him in a gorgeous robe, like a mock-king. Thus were all the marks of scorn imaginable put upon our dear Redeemer; yet all this jeering and sportful shame did our Lord undergo, to show what was due unto us for our sins; and also to give us an example to bear all the shame and reproach imaginable for his sake; *who for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame*, Heb. xii. 2. Observe lastly, The wicked accusation brought in against our blessed Redeemer; *We found (say they) this fellow perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Cesar*. O hellish untruth! How directly contrary to the

whole course and tenor of Christ's life was this accusation ! By his doctrine he preached up subjection to governors and government ; saying, *Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*. And by his practice he confirmed his own doctrine, working a miracle to pay tribute to Cesar. Satan could help them to draw up an indictment as black as hell, against the innocent Jesus ; but all the powers of hell and darkness could not prove a tittle of it.

13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people : and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him : 15 No, nor yet Herod : for I sent you to him : and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto *him*. 16 I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*. 17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas : 19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) 20 Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21 But they cried, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify him. 22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done ? I have found no cause of death in him : I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go. 23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests, prevailed. 24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired ; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Observe here, 1. How unwilling, how very unwilling, Pilate was to be an instru-

ment of our Saviour's death. One while he expostulates with the chief priests, saying, *What evil hath he done ?* Nay, St. Luke here declares, that Pilate came forth three several times, professing that he found no fault in him. Where note, How much more justice and equity Christ met with from Pilate an heathen, than from the chief priests and people of the Jews, professing the true religion. O how desperate is the hatred that grows upon the root of religion ! Learn hence, That hypocrites within the church may be guilty of such tremendous acts of wickedness, as the consciences of infidels and pagans without the church may boggle at and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews, that heard his doctrine and saw his miracles, do condemn him. Observe, 2. How Pilate at last suffers himself to be overcome with the importunity of the Jews, and delivers the holy and innocent Jesus, contrary to his judgment and conscience, to the will of his murderers. It is a vain apology for sin, when persons pretend that they are not committed with their own consent, but at the instigation and importunity of others : for such is the frame and constitution of man's soul, that none can make a person wicked without his own consent ; it was no extenuation of Pilate's sin, no alleviation of his punishment, that to please the people he delivered our Saviour, contrary to the directions of his own conscience, to be crucified. Observe, 3. The person whose life the wicked Jews preferred before the life of the holy Jesus ; *Barabbas* ; we will that thou release *Barabbas*, and deliver Jesus. Mark these hypocritical high priests, who pretended such a zeal for God and religion ; they prefer the life of a person guilty of the highest immoralities and debaucheries, even murder and sedition, before the best man that ever lived in the world. But whence sprang the malice and hatred of the high priests, and people of the Jews, against our Saviour ? Why, plainly from hence, Christ interpreted the law of God more strictly than their lusts could bear ; and he lived a more holy, useful, and excellent life than they could endure. Now nothing enrages the men of the world more against the professors, but especially the preachers, of the gospel, than holiness of doctrine, and strictness of life and conversation. Such as preach and live well, let them expect such enmity and opposition, such malice and persecution, such sufferings and trials, as will shock an ordinary patience

and constancy of mind. Our Master met with it; let his zealous ministers prepare for it.

26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

The sentence of death being passed by Pilate, who can with dry eyes behold the sad pomp of our Saviour's execution! Forth comes the blessed Jesus out of Pilate's gates, bearing that cross which soon after was to bear him. With his cross on his shoulder, he marches towards Golgotha; and when they see he can go no faster, they compel Simon of Cyrenia, not out of compassion, but indignation, to bear his cross. This Cyrenian being a Gentile who bore Christ's cross, some think thereby was signified, that the Gentiles should have a part in Christ, as well as the Jews, and be sharers with them in the benefits of the cross.

27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. 28 But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. 29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. 30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. 31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

There were four sorts of persons which attended our Saviour at his crucifixion: the executioners that tormented him, the Jews that mocked him, the spectators and lookers-on that marked him, and sympathizing friends which lamented him: these last Christ bespoke, *Weep not for me, but for yourselves*; that is, "Weep rather upon your own account than mine: reserve your sorrows for the calamities coming upon yourselves and your children." It is very probable, that the tears and lamentations of many of these mourners were but the fruits of tender nature, not the effects of faith,

and flowing from a principle of grace. Learn thence, That melting affections and sorrows, even from the sense of Christ's sufferings, are not infallible marks of grace. The history of Christ's sufferings is very tragical and pathetic, and may melt ingenuous nature, where there is no renewed principle of grace. These motions of the affections may rather be a fit and mood, than the very frame and temper of the soul. There are times and seasons when the roughest and most obdurate hearts may be pensive and tender; but that is not its temper and frame, but only a fit, a pang, a transient passion. There is no inferring or concluding then a work of grace upon the heart, simply and barely from the movings or meltings of the affections. Nature will have its good moods, but grace is steady: *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me*, says Christ.

32 And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33 And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors; one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Here we see the infamous company that our holy Lord suffered with; *two thieves*. It had been a sufficient disparagement to our blessed Saviour, to be sorted with the best of men; but to be numbered with the scum of mankind, is such an indignity as confounds our thoughts: this was designed by the Jews to dishonour and disgrace our Saviour the more; and to persuade the world, that he was the greatest of offenders: but God overruled this, for fulfilling an ancient prophecy concerning the Messiah, *Isa. liii. 12. And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Christ had often preached the doctrine of forgiving enemies, and praying for them; he practises it here himself in a most exemplary manner. Where note, 1. The mercy desired and prayed for; and that is, forgiveness. 2. The person desiring that mercy, Christ, the dying Jesus. 3. The persons for whom it is desired, his bloody murderers; *Father, forgive them.* 4.

The argument used, or motive urged, to procure this mercy: *Forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Learn hence, 1. That ignorance is the usual cause of enmity against Christ. 2. That there is forgiveness with God, for such as oppose, yea, persecute Christ out of ignorance. That to forgive enemies, and to beg forgiveness for them, is an evidence of a Christ-like frame of Spirit; *Father, forgive them*: not that the gospel requires of us an insensibility of wrongs and injuries; that allows us a sense of offered evils, though it forbids us to revenge them; yet the more tender our resentments are, the more excellent our forgiveness is: so that a forgiving spirit doth not exclude a sense of injuries; but the sense of injuries graces the forgiveness of them: neither doth the gospel require us, under the notion of forgiving injuries, to deliver up our rights and properties to the lusts of every one that will invade them, but meekly to receive evil, and readily to return good.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ the chosen of God. 36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37 And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. 38 And a superscription also was written over him, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

Observe here, 1. A mighty aggravation of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross; namely, the mocking derision which he met with in his dying moments. As he endured the pain so he despised the shame: cruel mockings was our Lord tried with, both from the common people and from the chief priests; yet the common people's reviling him, and wagging their heads at him, was not so much to be taken notice of, as the chief priests, who were men of age and gravity, and the ministers of religion: for them barbarously to mock him in his misery; and, which was worse, atheistically to jeer and scoff at his faith and affiance in God, saying, *He trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, if he will have him*; this was such an indignity as confounds our

thoughts. But from hence we learn, 1. That persecutors are generally atheistical scoffers: the chief priests and elders, who persecuted Christ, do blaspheme God; they mock at his power, and deride his providence, which was as wicked as to deny his being. 2. We learn from this example, that such as minister to God in holy things by way of office, if they be not the best, they are generally the worst of men; no such bitter enemies to the power of godliness, as such preachers who were never experimentally acquainted with the efficacy and power of it upon their own hearts and lives. Observe, 2. The inscription wrote by Pilate over our suffering Saviour, *This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.* It was the custom of the Romans, when they crucified a malefactor, to publish the cause of his death in capital letters, placed over the head of the person. Now it is observable how wonderfully the wisdom of God overruled the heart and pen of Pilate, to draw this title, which was truly honourable, and fix it to his cross. Pilate is Christ's herald, and proclaims him *King of the Jews.* Learn hence, That the kingship and regal dignity of Christ was proclaimed by an enemy, and that in time of his greatest sufferings and reproaches. Pilate without his knowledge did our Saviour an eminent piece of service: verily, he did that for Christ which none of his own disciples durst do; not that he did it designedly, and with any intent to put honour upon Christ, but from the special overruling providence of God. No thanks to Pilate for all this; because the highest services performed for Christ undesignedly, shall never be accepted nor rewarded by him.

39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

Here we have a further aggravation of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross, from the company he suffered with, the two

thieves who reviled him with the rest. St. Matthew and St. Mark say, they both reviled him; St. Luke says *one* of them reviled; possibly both of them might do it at first, and one of them repent; which, if so, increases the wonder of the penitent thief's conversion. From the impenitent thief's reviling of Christ, when he was at the very point of death, and even in the suburbs of hell, we learn, That neither shame nor pain will change the mind of a resolute sinner; but even then, when he is in the suburbs of hell, will he blaspheme. From the penitent thief's confessing of Christ, and praying to him, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*: we learn, both the efficacy and freeness of divine grace. 1. The efficacious power of it: O how powerful must that grace be, which wrought such a change in an instant, which supplied that heart in a moment, which had been hardening in sin for so many years. 2. The freeness of it; which takes hold of his heart, when he is at the height of sin, and was not only void of grace, but seemed past grace. O the powerful efficacy and adorable freeness of the heart-changing grace of God in this vile person; it disposed him to own his sin, to confess the justness of the punishment, to justify Christ's innocence, to reprove his fellow companion, to pray to a crucified Christ, and to intercede with him, not for present deliverance from death, but for a place in Christ's kingdom. Where we learn, 1. That true conversion is never too late for obtaining mercy and salvation. 2. That true conversion, how late soever, will have its fruits: the fore-mentioned fruits of faith and repentance were found with this penitent thief; yet must not this extraordinary case be drawn into example. This extraordinary and miraculous grace of God is not to be expected ordinarily: we have no warrant to expect an overpowering degree of God's grace to turn our hearts in an instant at the hour of death, when we have lived in forgetfulness of God, and in a supine neglect of our soul's concerns all the days of our life; for it is evident as to this case of the penitent thief's conversion at the last hour, 1. It is an example without a promise. 2. It is but a single example. 3. It is an example recorded but by one evangelist: the Spirit of God, foreseeing what an ill use some would make of this instance, leaves one example upon record, that none might despair; and but one, that none might presume. 4. This thief probably had never

any knowledge of Christ before. 5. This thief improved his time at last, as never did any before or after; for he believed Christ to be the Saviour of the world, when one disciple had betrayed, another denied him, and all had forsaken him; he owned him to be the Son of God, the Lord of life, when he was suffering the pains of death, and seemingly deserted by his Father: he proclaims him Lord of paradise, and disposer of the kingdom of heaven, when the Jews had condemned him, and the Gentiles crucified him as the vilest of impostors. He feared God, owned the justice of his punishment; was solicitous, not for the preservation of his body, but for the salvation of his soul; yea, not of his own only, but of his brother's that suffered with him; so that he glorified Christ more at the moment of his death, than some do in the whole course of their lives. 6. This was a miracle, with the glory whereof Christ would honour the ignominy of his cross: so that we have no more ground to expect such another conversion, than we have to expect a second crucifixion. This converted person was the first fruits of the blood of the cross. From whence we learn, That God can, and sometimes doth, though very seldom, prepare men for glory, immediately before their dissolution by death. His grace is his own, he may dispense it how, and when, where, and to whom he pleases; yet this is no more warrant to neglect the ordinary, because God doth sometimes manifest his grace in an extraordinary way. True, in this conversion we have a pattern of what free grace can do; but it is a pattern without a promise: where we have not a promise to encourage our hope, our hope is nothing but presumption.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

These words are our Saviour's gracious answer to the penitent thief's humble prayer, *Lord, remember me in thy kingdom*, says the thief; *To-day shalt thou be with me in my kingdom*, says our Saviour. Where note, 1. The immortality of the souls of men is without all doubt: our desires after, and hopes for, immortality, do prove our souls immortal, and capable of that state. The souls of men die not with their bodies, but remain in a state of sensibility. 2. That there is a future and eternal state, into which souls pass at death.



Death is our passage out of the swift river of time, into the boundless and bottomless ocean of eternity. 3. That the souls of all the righteous at death are immediately received into a state of happiness and glory; *This day shalt thou be with me*; not after thy resurrection, but immediately after thy dissolution. That man's soul is asleep, or worse, that dreams of the soul's sleeping till the resurrection: for why should the believers' happiness be deferred, when they are immediately capable of enjoying it? Why should their salvation slumber, when the wicked's damnation slumbereth not? How do such delays consist with Christ's ardent desires, and his people's vehement longing to be together?

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth, until the ninth hour. 45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. 47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. 48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. 49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

Observe here, 1. What prodigies in nature happened and fell out at the crucifixion of our Saviour: the sun was darkened at the setting of the Sun of Righteousness; and the veil of the temple was rent; signifying that God was now about to forsake his temple; that the ceremonial law was now abolishing, and the partition-wall betwixt Jew and Gentile being now pulling down, all may have access to God through the blood of a Mediator. Observe, 2. The last prayer of our Saviour before his death, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*; they are words full of faith and comfort, fit to be the last breathings of every gracious soul in this world. Learn hence, That dying believers are both warranted and encouraged by Christ's example, be-

lievingly to commend their precious souls into the hands of God as a gracious father, *Father, into thy hands*. Observe, 3. What influence our Saviour's death had upon the centurion: *He glorified God, saying, Verily this was a righteous man*. Here note, That Christ had a testimony of his innocency and righteousness given unto him from all sorts of persons whatsoever: Pilate and Herod pronounced him innocent; Pilate's wife proclaimed him a righteous person; Judas, the traitor, declared it was innocent blood; the thief on the cross affirmed he had done nothing amiss; and the centurion owned him to be a righteous man; yea, the Son of God, *Mark* xv. 39. Only the Pharisees and chief priests, which were teachers of others; not ignorance, but obstinacy and malice, blinded and hardened them to their ruin and destruction; instead of owning and receiving him for their Saviour, they ignominiously put him to death as the vilest impostor.

50 And, behold, *there was a man* named Joseph, a counsellor; *and he was a good man, and a just*: 51 (*The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them*;) *he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God*. 52 *This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus*. 53 *And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid*. 54 *And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on*. 55 *And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid*. 56 *And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandments*.

The circumstances of our Lord's funeral and honourable interment are here recorded by our evangelist; such a funeral as never was since graves were first digged. Where observe, 1. Our Lord's body must be begged before it could be buried; the dead bodies of malefactors being in the power, and at the disposal, of the judge that con-

demons them. Observe, 2. The person that begged his body, and bestowed a decent and honourable burial upon it: Joseph of Arimathea, a worthy, though a close disciple. Grace doth not always make a public and open show where it is; but as there is much secret treasure in the bowels of the earth, though unseen, so is there much grace in the hearts of some saints, which the world takes little notice of. Observe, 3. The mourners that followed our Saviour's hearse to the grave; the women which came out of Galilee; a poor train of mourners. The apostles, who should have been most officious to bear his holy body to the ground, were some time since all scattered, afraid to own their Master, either dying or dead. Funeral pomp had been no way suitable, either to the end or manner of our Lord's death, and accordingly here is nothing like it. Observe, 4. The grave or sepulchre in which our holy Lord lay; it was a sepulchre *hewn out of a rock*; that so his enemies might have no occasion to say, that his disciples stole him away by secret holes, and unseen passages under ground. It was in a new sepulchre, *wherein never man was laid before*, lest his adversaries should say, it was another that was risen, who was buried there before him. And he was buried in a *garden*; as by the sin of the first Adam we were driven out of the garden of pleasure, the earthly paradise, so by the sufferings of the second Adam, who lay buried in a garden, we may hope for entrance into the heavenly paradise. Observe, 5. The manner of our Lord's funeral; it was hasty, open, and decent. Hasty, because of the preparation for the sabbath; open, that all persons might be spectators, and none might say, he was buried before he was dead; decent, being wrapt up in fine linen, and perfumed with spices. Observe, 6. The reason why our Lord was thus buried, seeing he was to rise again in as short a time as other men lie by the walls; doubtless it was to declare the certainty of his death, to fulfil the types and prophecies which went before him: as Jonas's being *three days and three nights in the whale's belly*. He was also buried, to complete his humiliation. This was the lowest step to which he could descend in his abased state. In a word, Christ descended into the grave, that he might conquer death in its own territories and dominions. Observe, 7. Of what use our Lord's burial is to his followers;

it shows us the amazing depths of his humiliation, from what, and to what, his love brought him, even from the bosom of his Father to the bosom of the grave. It may comfort us against the fears of death, and the terrors of the grave: the grave could not long keep Christ; it shall not always keep christians: it was a loathsome prison before, it is a perfumed bed now: he whose head is in heaven, need not fear to put his feet into the grave. Awake and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust, for the enemy of the grave is slain by Christ.

## CHAP. XXIV.

The last chapter of St. Luke's Gospel contains the history of our Saviour's resurrection, and gives us an account of what he did upon earth, between the time of his glorious resurrection and triumphant ascension.

**N**OW upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. 3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus, 4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: 5 And, as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, 7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8 And they remembered his words, 9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women* that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. 12 Then arose Peter, and

ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

The Lord of life, who was put to death upon the Friday, was buried in the evening of the same day; and his holy body rested in the silent grave all the next day, being the Jewish sabbath, and some part of the morning following. Thus rose he again the third day, according to the scriptures, neither sooner nor later; not sooner, lest the truth of his death should have been questioned that he did not die at all; not later, lest the faith of his disciples should have failed. Accordingly, when the sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene getting the other women together, she and they set out very early in the morning, to visit the holy sepulchre, and about sun-rising they get to it, intending with their spices and odours farther to embalm the Lord's body. Observe here, 1. That although the hearts of these holy women did burn with an ardent zeal and affection to their crucified Lord; yet the commanded duties of the sabbath are not omitted by them; they keep close, and silently spend that holy day in a mixture of grief and hope. A good pattern of sabbath sanctification, and worthy of our imitation. Observe, 2. These holy women go, but not empty handed: she that had bestowed a costly alabaster upon Christ whilst alive, prepares no less precious odours for him now dead; thereby paying their last homage to our Saviour's corpse. But what need of odours to perfume a precious body, which could not see corruption? True, his holy body did not want them, but the love and affection of his friends could not withhold them. Observe, 3. How great a tribute of respect and honour is due and payable to the memory of these holy women, for their great magnanimity and courage: they followed Christ when his cowardly disciples left him; they accompanied him to his cross, when his disciples did not, durst not appear, and now very early in the morning they visit his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the presence of the watchmen, though a band of rude soldiers. Learn hence, That courage and resolution is the special gift of God: if he gives it to the feeble sex, even to timorous and fearful

women, it shall not be in the power of armed men to make them afraid. But to a close consideration of the several circumstances relating to the resurrection of our holy Lord: Note 1. With what pomp and triumph our holy Lord arises: two men, that is, two angels in the shape of men, *ver. 4. are sent from heaven to roll away the stone.* But could not Christ have risen then without the angels' help? Yes, doubtless he that raised himself could easily have rolled away the stone himself; but God thinks fit to send an officer from heaven to open the prison door of the grave; and by setting our Surety at liberty, proclaims our debt to the divine justice fully satisfied. Besides, it was fit that the angels, who had been witnesses of our Saviour's passion, should also be witnesses of his resurrection. Note, 2. Our Lord's resurrection declared, *He is risen, he is not here.* Almighty God never intended that the darling of his soul should be left in an obscure sepulchre. *He is not here, said the angels, where you laid him, where you left him; death has lost its prey, and the grave has lost its prisoner.* Note, 3. It is not said, *He is not here, for he is raised; but, He is risen; ver. 6.* The original word imports the active power of Christ, or the self-quickening principle by which Christ raised himself from the dead, *Acts i. 3. He showed himself alive after his passion.* Hence learn, That it was the divine nature or Godhead of Christ, which raised the human nature from death to life; others were raised from the grave by Christ's power, but he raised himself by his own power. Note, 4. The persons to whom our Lord's resurrection was first declared and made known; to women, to the two Marys. But why to women? and why to these women? To women first, because God sometimes makes choice of weak means for producing great effects; knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honour of the agent. In the whole dispensation of the gospel, God intermixes divine power with human weakness. Thus the conception of Christ was by the power of the Holy Ghost; but his mother, a poor woman, a carpenter's spouse. So the crucifixion of Christ was in much meanness and outward baseness, being crucified between two thieves; but the powers of heaven and earth trembling, the rocks rending, the graves opening, showed a mixture of divine power. Thus here, God selects women to declare, that he will ho-

nour what instruments he pleases, for the accomplishment of his own purposes. But why to these women, the two Marys, is the first discovery made of our Lord's resurrection? Possibly it was a reward for their magnanimity and masculine courage. These women clave to Christ, when the apostles forsook him: they assisted at his cross, they attended at his funeral, they waited at his sepulchre: these women had more courage than the apostles, therefore God makes them apostles to the apostles. This was a tacit rebuke, a secret check given to the apostles, that they should be thus outdone by women: these holy women went before the apostles in the last services that were done for Christ, and therefore the apostles here come after them in their rewards and comforts. Note, 5. The quick message which these holy women carry to the disconsolate disciples, of the joyful news of our Saviour's resurrection; they returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven, ver. 9. And the other evangelists say, That they were sent and bidden to go to the apostles with the notices of the resurrection, *Go tell the disciples*, says the angel, *Matt. xxviii.* 7. *Go tell my brethren*, says Christ, ver 10. A most endearing expression. Christ might have said, "Go tell my apostate apostles, my cowardly disciples, that left me in my danger, and durst not own me in the high-priest's hall, that durst not come within the shadow of my cross, not within sight of my sepulchre." But not one word of all this by upbraiding them for their late shameful cowardice, but all words of divine indulgence, and endearing kindness; *Go tell my brethren.* Where mark, That Christ calls them *brethren* after his resurrection and exaltation, thereby showing, that the change of his condition had wrought no change in his affection towards his poor disciples: but those that were his brethren before, in the time of his humiliation and abasement, are so still, after his exaltation and advancement: *Go tell my brethren.* One thing more must be noted with reference to our Lord's resurrection, and that is, why he did not first choose to appear to the Virgin Mary, his disconsolate mother, whose soul was pierced with a quick and lively sight and sense of her Son's sufferings; but to Mary Magdalene, who had been a grievous sinner? Doubtless this was for the comfort of all true penitents, and administers great consolation to them: as the angels in heaven rejoice, much more

doth Christ, in the recovery of one repenting sinner, than in multitudes of holy and just persons (such was the blessed Virgin, who need no repentance. For the same reason did our Saviour particularly name Peter, *Go tell my disciples, and Peter*; he being for his denial of Christ swallowed up with sorrow, and standing in most need of consolation; therefore speak particularly to Peter: as if Christ had said, "Be sure that his sad heart be comforted with this joyful news, that I am risen; and let him know, that I am friends with him, notwithstanding his late cowardice."

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day, to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 And it came to pass, that while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. 17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? 18 And the one of them whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. 21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. 22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: 23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, That they had also seen a vision

of angels, which said that he was alive. 24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said ; but him they saw not.

Here we have observable, 1. The journey which two of the disciples took to Emmaus, a village not far from Jerusalem. The occasion of their journey is not told us, but the scripture acquaints us with their discourse in their journey, and as they were walking by the way. It was holy and useful, pious and profitable discourse, that they entertained one another with as they walked ; they discoursed of Christ's death and resurrection ; a good pattern for our imitation, when providentially cast into such company as will bear it : *That our lips drop as the honey-comb, and our tongue be as choice silver.* Observe, 2. How our holy Lord presently made one in the company ; when they were discoursing seriously about the matters of religion, he overtook them, and joined himself to them. The way to have Christ's presence and company with us is to be discoursing of Christ and the things of Christ. Observe, 3. Though Christ came to them, it was *incognito* ; he was not known to them, for their eyes were holden by the power of God, their sight was restrained, that they could not discern who he was, but took him for another person, though his body had the same dimensions that he had before. Whence we learn, The influence which God has upon all our powers and faculties, upon all our members and senses, and how much we depend upon God for the use and exercise of our faculties and members : *Their eyes were holden that they could not know him.* Observe, 4. That the notion of the Messiah being a temporal Saviour, was so deeply rooted in the minds of the disciples, that it remained here with them, even after he was risen from the dead. They here own and acknowledge him to be a *prophet mighty in deed and in word*, but they question whether he were the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel. They could not reconcile the ignominy of his death with the grandeur of his office ; nor conceive how the infamy of a cross was consistent with the glory of a king : *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.* As if they had said, " We were full of hopes, that this had been the Messiah so long ex-

pected by us ; but, this being the third day since he died, we fear we shall find ourselves mistaken."

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ! 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? 27 And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. 28 And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went : and he made as though he would have gone further. 29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us ; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30 And it came to pass as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him ; and he vanished out of their sight. 32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures ?

Observe, 1. Our Saviour reproves, and then instructs them. He reproves them for being ignorant of the sense of scripture. They thought the death of the Messiah a sufficient ground to question the truth of his office, when it was an argument to confirm and establish it : *O fools, ought not Christ to suffer ?* As if he had said, " Do you not find that the person described by the prophets in the Old Testament to be the Messiah, was to wade to his glory through a sea of blood ? Why then do you think yourselves deceived in the person who suffered three days ago, when his death doth agree so well with the predictions of the prophets, who foretold, that the Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself, and be smitten for the iniquities of his people ? Here we may observe, The great wisdom and grace of God, who makes sometimes the diffidence of his people an occasion of farther clearing up the choicest truths unto them : never did these disciples hear so excellent an exposition of Moses and the Prophets concerning the Messiah as now, when

their sinful distrust had so far prevailed over them. Observe, 2. The doctrines which Christ instructs his disciples in, namely, in the necessity of his death and passion, and of his glory and exaltation; *Ought not Christ to suffer, and to enter into his glory?* Learn, 1. That with respect to God's decree, and with relation to man's guilt, the death of Christ was necessary and indispensable. 2. That his resurrection and exaltation was as necessary as his passion. 3. That there was a meritorious connexion between Christ's sufferings and his glory; his exaltation was merited by his passion; *He was to drink of the brook in the way, and then he was to lift up his head.* Observe, 4. Christ did not only put light into these his apostles' heads, but heat also into their hearts, which burned all the while he communed with them; *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he opened to us the scriptures?* Oh what an efficacious power is there in the word of Christ, when set home upon the hearts of men by the Spirit of Christ!

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. 36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, *Peace be unto you.* 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And he said unto them, *Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?* 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, *Have ye here any meat?* 42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. 43

And he took it, and did eat before them. 44 And he said unto them, *These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.*

Observe, 1. That these two disciples at Emmaus, being fully satisfied in the truth of Christ's resurrection, by his appearing to them in breaking of bread, they arose presently, and went from Einmaus to Jerusalem. It must needs be late at night, being after supper, and seven miles distant; yet considering the sorrows that the disciples were under, these two leave all their private affairs, and hasten to comfort them with the glad tidings of our Lord's resurrection. Teaching us, That all secular affairs, all private and particular business, must give place to the glory of God, and the comfort and salvation of souls. Observe, 2. The great endeavours which our Saviour used, to confirm his disciples' faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, *He comes and stands in the midst of them, and says, Peace be unto you; next he shows them his pierced hands, side, and feet, with the scars and marks, which he yet retained, that they might see it was their crucified Master: after all this, He eats before them a piece of a broiled fish, and honey-comb; not that he needed it, his body being now become immortal; but to assure them that it was his own person; and that he had still the same body. Yet so slack and backward were they to believe that Christ was risen, that all the predictions of the scripture, all the assurances they had from our Saviour's mouth, and the several appearances of Christ unto them, were little enough to establish and confirm their faith in the resurrection of our Saviour.* Observe, 3. The highest and fullest evidence which our Saviour offers to evince and prove the certainty of his resurrection, namely, by appealing to their senses; *Handle me and see.* Christ admits the testimony of our senses, to assure it to be his real body. And if the church of Rome will not allow us to believe our senses, we shall lose the best external evidence we can have to prove the truth of the christian religion; namely, the miracles of Christ: for how can I know that those miracles were true, but by the judgment of my

senses? Now, as our senses tell us, that Christ's miracles were true, so they assure us, that the doctrine of transubstantiation is false.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day : 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

It is one thing to open the scriptures themselves, or to explain them, and another to open their understandings to perceive them : Christ did the latter. Whence note, That the opening of the mind and heart effectually to receive the truths of God, is the peculiar prerogative and office of Jesus Christ ; *Then opened he their understandings* ; namely, by the illuminations of his Holy Spirit. One of the greatest miseries under which lapsed nature labours, is spiritual blindness ; Christ has the only eye-salve which can heal and cure it, *Rev. iii. 18.* And there is no worse cloud to obscure the light of the Spirit, than a proud conceit of our own knowledge. Observe, 2. The special charge given by our Saviour to his apostles, *to preach repentance and remission of sins* ; to preach it in Christ's name, to preach it *to all nations, beginning first at Jerusalem.* Where note, the astonishing mercy of Jesus Christ : although Jerusalem was the place where he lost his life, the city that barbarously butchered, and inhumanly murdered him, yet there will he have the doctrine of repentance preached ; nay, *first preached* ! there the gospel combination must first begin, *That repentance and remission of sins be preached, beginning at Jerusalem.* Lord ! How unwilling art thou that any should perish, when thou not only prayedst for thy murderers, and offeredst up thy blood to God in the behalf of them that shed it, but requiredst thy ambassadors to make Jerusalem the

first tender of remission, upon condition of repentance ! *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. 50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany ; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy ; 53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Our Saviour, being now about to leave his disciples, comforts them with the promise of his Holy Spirit, which should supply the want of his bodily presence ; and bids them tarry at Jerusalem till they should, at the feast of Pentecost, be made partakers of this invaluable blessing. Observe, 2. Our Lord having blessed his disciples, he takes his leave of them, and goes up into heaven. As he raised himself out of his grave, so did he ascend into heaven by his own power, there to appear in the presence of God for us ; and, as our Forerunner, to give us an assurance, that in due time we shall ascend after him, *Whither our Forerunner is for us entered,* Heb. vi. 20. Observe lastly, The act of homage and adoration which the apostles perform to the Lord Jesus ; how they worshipped him, that is, as God, the eternal Son of God, being so declared by the resurrection from the dead, and by his ascension into heaven before their eyes, from whence he will certainly come at the end of the world, to judge both the quick and the dead. For which solemn hour, God Almighty prepare all mankind by a renewed frame of heart, and a religious course of life ; and then, *Come Lord Jesus to judgment, come quickly.* Amen.

THE  
HOLY GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO  
S A I N T J O H N .

The fourth and last of the HOLY GOSPELS falls under consideration: namely that which was written by the evangelist St. John; concerning which we have observable, the writer, the occasion, the design and scope of this sublime book. Observe, 1. The writer of it, St. John, the beloved disciple, that lay in the bosom of Christ; he that lay in Christ's bosom reveals the secrets of Christ's heart, John, with St. Austin, drew out of the bosom of Christ the very heart of Christ, and made it known to a lost world. Observe, 2. The occasion of St. John's writing this Gospel, and that was the heresy of Ebion and Cerinthus, which denied the divinity of JESUS CHRIST. When GOD suffers heretics to vent their blasphemous opinions, he takes occasion from thence to make a clearer discovery of divine truth. We had perhaps wanted St. John's Gospel, if Ebion and Cerinthus had not broached their heresy against Christ's divinity. Observe, 3. The design and scope of this Gospel, which is to describe the person of Christ in his two natures, Divine and Human, as the object of our faith: this he doth in a sublime and lofty manner; upon which account he was compared by the ancients to the eagle that soars aloft, and maketh her nest on high; and was also called John the Divine. Observe lastly, The difference between this and the other Gospels. The other evangelists chiefly insist upon the Humanity of Christ, and prove him to be truly man, the Son of the Virgin Mary; this evangelist proves him to be God as well as man; God from eternity, and man in the fulness of time. The other three writers relate what Christ did; St. John reports what Christ said: they recount his miracles, he records his sermons and prayers. In short, the profound mysteries of our holy religion are here unfolded by the beloved disciple; and particularly the divinity and incarnation of our BLESSED SAVIOUR.

CHAP. I.

**I**N the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, Jesus Christ, under the name of the *Word*, *In the beginning was the Word*. Because God spake to us by him, and makes known his will to us by Christ, as we make known our minds to one another by our words. Again; As our words are the conception and image of our minds, so Christ is the express Image of his Father's person, and was begotten of the Father, even as our words are begotten of our minds: for these reasons he is often styled *the Word*. Observe, 2. What the evangelist here asserts concerning the Word, Christ Jesus, even three particulars; namely, his external existence, his personal co-existence, and his divine essence. 1. His eternal existence; *In the beginning was the Word*: in the beginning, when all things received their being,

then the Word was, and did actually subsist, even from all eternity. Not in the beginning of the gospel-state, but in the beginning of the creation, as appears from the following words, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*. Which plainly shows that the evangelist is here speaking of the creation, rise, or beginning of all things created. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ, not only antecedent to his incarnation, but even before all time, and the beginning of all things, had an actual being and existence. 2. His personal co-existence with the Father, *The word was with God*; that is, eternally and inseparably with him, in the same essence and nature, being in the Father, as well as with him, so that the Father never was without him, Prov. viii. 22. *I was by him as one brought up with him*. I was by his side, says the Chaldee interpreter. Learn hence, That the Son is a Person distinct from the Father, but of the same essence and nature with the Father; he is God of God, very God of very God; being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were



made: *The Word was with God.* 3. His divine essence. *The Word was God.* Here St. John declares the divinity, as he did before the eternity, of our blessed Saviour. He was with God, and existed in him; therefore he must be God, and a Person distinct from the Father. The Word was God, say the Socinians, that is, a god by office, not by nature, as being God's ambassador. But the word *God* is used eleven times in this chapter in its proper sense; and it is not reasonable to conceive that it should be here used in an improper sense, in which this word in the singular number is never used throughout the whole New Testament: *Dr. Whitby.* Learn hence, That the eternity, the personality, and the divinity of Christ, are of necessity to be believed, if we will worship him aright. Christ tells us, *John v. 23. that we must worship the Son even as we worship the Father.* Now unless we acknowledge the eternity and divinity of Christ, the second Person, as well as of God the Father, the first Person, we honour neither the Father nor the Son. There is this difference between natural things and supernatural: Natural things are first understood, and then believed; but supernatural mysteries must be first believed, and then will be better understood. If we will first set reason on work, and believe no more than we can comprehend, this will hinder faith: but if after we have assented to gospel mysteries, we set reason on work, this will help faith.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Observe here, The argument which St. John uses to prove Christ to be God; it is taken from the work of creation. He that made all things, is truly and really God; but Christ made all things, and nothing was made without him; therefore is Christ truly and really God. Here observe, 1. An affirmation of as large and vast an extent as the whole world. *All things* were made by him; not this or that particular being, but *all* created beings received their existence and being from Christ. Observe, 2. That to prevent the least imagination of any thing's having another author than Christ, here is the most positive and particular negation that can be: that without him was not any thing made that was made; not without him as an instrument,

but without him as an agent, Christ being a co-worker with the Father and the Spirit in the work of creation. He was an Author of the creation, not an instrument in creating. Learn thence, that Christ, as God, being the Creator and Maker of all things himself, is excluded from being a creature, or any thing that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Here we have a farther proof of Christ's divinity, and an evidence that he had a being as God, before his incarnation: forasmuch as life is centred in him, communicated by him, and derived from him. In him was life, *formaliter et causaliter.* Life was formally in Christ, as the subject of it; and also causally in him as the fountain of it. Learn, 1. That Christ is Author and Dispenser of all life unto his creatures. He is the original life in the order of nature, because by him man was created, *Gen. i. 26.* He is spiritual life in the order of grace, *John xiv. 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life.* He is eternal life in the order of glory, *1 John v. 20. This is the true God, and eternal life.* Learn, 2. That all creatures receiving light and life from Christ, not as an instrument, but as the fountain from whence it floweth, and in which it is preserved, is an evident proof of his divinity, and an argument that he is truly and really God. *In him was life, and the life was the light of men*

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Here the evangelist proceeds in declaring Christ to be really God, because he was that original, that essential light, which had no beginning, suffers no decay, but is diffusive, and in some kind and in some measure or other, to enlighten every man that cometh into the world. Some of the Jews had a conceit, that John the Baptist was the promised Messiah, as appears by *Luke iii. 15. The people were in expectation, and all men*

*mused in their hearts of John whether he were the Christ or not.* Here therefore, to undeceive the Jews, the evangelist adds, that *John was not that light* : John was a great light, a burning and a shining light, but not such a light as the Messiah was to be. John was a light instrumentally, Christ efficiently : John was a light enlightened, Christ was a light enlightening ; John's light was by derivation and participation, Christ's was essential and original ; John's light was the light of a candle in a private house, in and among the Jews only ; but Christ's light was as the light of the sun, spreading over the face of the whole earth. *This is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world* ; that is, he enlightens all mankind with the light of reason, and is the Author of all spiritual illumination in them that receive it. Christ is called a light in regard of his office, which was to manifest and declare that salvation to his church which lay hid before in the purpose of God ; and he is called the *true light*, not so much in opposition to all false lights, but as opposed to the types and shadows of the Mosaical dispensation. Learn, 1. That every man and woman that comes into the world is enlightened by Christ in some kind and measure or other. All are enlightened with the light of reason and natural conscience : some with the light of grace and supernatural illumination. Learn, 5. That Christ being the essential, original, and eternal Light, enlightening and enlivening the whole creation, is an evident and undeniable demonstration that he is truly and really God.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

*He was in the world*, that is, he that was God from eternity, made himself visible to the world in the fulness of time. The evangelist repeats it again, that *the world was made by him*, to show his omnipotency and divinity ; and then adds, that *the world knew him not*, as an evidence of the world's blindness and ingratitude. Learn hence, That notwithstanding the eternal Son of God appeared in the world, and the world was made and created by him, yet the generality of the world did not know him ; that is, did not own and acknow-

ledge him, did not receive and obey him, They neither knew him as creator, nor accepted of him as mediator. Yea, *he came to his own* : that is, his own kindred and country, the church and people of the Jews ; but the generality of them gave him cold entertainment. It was the sin of the Jewish nation, that though they were Christ's own peculiar people, his own by choice, his own by purchase, his own by covenant, by kindred, yet the generality of them did reject him, and would not own him for the true and promised Messiah. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ met with manifest and shameful rejection even at the hands of those that were nearest to him by flesh and nature, *John xi. 5. Neither did his brethren believe on him.*

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe on his name* :

That is, although multitudes rejected him, yet some received and owned him for the true Messiah ; and those that did so, he advanced to the high dignity of adoption and sonship, giving them power, that is, right or privilege, to become the sons of God. Here note, 1. The nature of justifying faith declared, *As many as received him*. Now this receiving of Christ implies these three things, 1. The assent of the understanding to that divine testimony which the scripture gives of Christ. 2. The consent of the will to submit to this Jesus as Lord and King. 3. The affiance and trust of the heart in Christ alone for salvation ; for faith is not a bare credence, but a divine affiance, and such an affiance in Christ, and reliance upon him, as is the parent and principle of obedience to him. Note, 2. That it is the high and honourable privilege of all such as receive Christ by faith, to become the sons of God by adoption. This is a precious privilege, a free privilege, an honourable privilege, an abiding privilege, and calls for all possible returns of gratitude and thankfulness, of love and service, of duty and obedience, of submission and self resignation.

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Because the bragging Jews did much boast of their natural birth and descent from Abraham, as being his blood and offspring,

therefore it is here asserted, that men become not the children of God by natural propagation, but by spiritual regeneration: *They are not born of blood.* Grace runs not in the blood, piety is not hereditary. Religious parents propagate corruption, not regeneration. Were the conveyances of grace natural, good parents would not be so ill-suited with children as sometimes they are. No person then whatsoever has the gracious privilege of adoption by the first birth. *They are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man;* that is, no man by the utmost improvement of nature can raise himself up to this privilege of adoption, and be the author and efficient cause of his own regeneration. Learn hence, That man in all his capacities is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself. They, says Dr. Hammond, who by the influence of the highest rational principles, live most exactly according to the rule of rational nature, that is, of unregenerated morality, are the persons here described. Learn, 2. That God alone is the prime efficient Cause of regeneration. He works upon the understanding by illumination, and upon the will by sanctification: *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The evangelist having asserted the divinity of Christ in the foregoing verses, comes now to speak of his humanity and manifestation in our nature: *The word was made flesh.* Where note, 1. Our Saviour's incarnation for us. 2. His life and conversation here among us. *He dwelt* or tabernacled for a season with us. In the incarnation or assumption of our nature, observe, 1. The person assuming, *The Word*, that is, the second person subsisting in the glorious Godhead. Observe, 2. The nature assumed, *flesh*; that is, the human nature, consisting of soul and body. But why is it not said, *The Word was made man*? but, *The Word was made flesh.* Ans. To denote and set forth the wonderful abasement and condescension of Christ; there being more of vileness and weakness, and opposition to spirit, in the word *flesh*, than in the word *man*. Christ's taking flesh implies, that he did not only take

upon him the human nature, but all the weaknesses and infirmities of that nature also, (sinful infirmities and personal infirmities excepted,) he had nothing to do with our sinful flesh. Though Christ loved souls with an infinite and insuperable love, yet he would not sin to save a soul. And he took no personal infirmities upon him, but such as are common to the whole nature, as hunger, thirst, weariness. Observe, 3. The assumption itself, *He was made flesh*; that is, he assumed the human nature into an union with his Godhead, and so became a true and real man by that assumption. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ did really assume the true and perfect nature of man, into a personal union with his divine nature, and still remains true God, and true Man, in one person, for ever. O blessed union! O thrice happy conjunction! As Man, Christ had an experimental sense of our infirmities and wants; as God, he can support and supply them all. Note farther, 2. As our Saviour's incarnation for us, so his life and conversation among us; *He dwelt*, or tabernacled amongst us. The tabernacle was a type of Christ's human nature. 1. As the outside of the tabernacle was mean, made of ordinary materials, but its inside glorious; so was the Son of God. 2. God's special presence was in the tabernacle; there he dwelt, for he had a delight therein. In like manner dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily in Christ; and the glory of his divinity shined forth to the eye and view of his disciples; for *they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*; that is, whilst Christ appeared as a man amongst us, he gave great and glorious testimonies of his being the Son of God. Learn hence, That in the day of our Saviour's incarnation, the divinity of his person did shine forth through the veil of his flesh, and was seen by all them that had a spiritual eye to behold it, and a mind disposed to consider it. *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.*

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. 16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18 No man hath

seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Here we have John Baptist's first testimony concerning Christ the promised Messiah: and it consists of four parts. 1. John prefers Christ before himself, as being surpassingly above himself. *He that cometh after me is preferred before me*, that is, in the dignity of his person, and in the eminency of his office, as being the eternal God. *Now amongst them that were born of women, there was not a greater than John the Baptist*: if Christ then was greater than John, it was in regard of his being God. He is therefore *preferred before him, because he was before him*, as being God from all eternity. Learn hence, That the dignity and eternity of Christ's person as God, sets him up above all his ministers; yea, above all creatures, how excellent soever. *He that cometh after me in time, is preferred before me in dignity; for he was before me*, even from all eternity. 2. John prefers Christ before all believers, in point of fulness and sufficiency of divine grace: *Of his fulness do they receive*. They have their failings, Christ has his fulness: theirs is the fulness of a vessel, his is the fulness of a fountain: their fulness is derivative, his fulness is original, yet also ministerial, on purpose in him to give out to us, that we may receive *grace for grace*: that is, grace answerable for kind and quality, though not for measure and degree. As a child in generation receives from its parent member for member, or as the paper in the printing-press receives letter for letter, and the wax under the seal receives print for print; so in the work of regeneration, whatever grace is in Christ, there is the like for kind stamped upon the christian's soul. All the members of Christ being made plentiful partakers of his spiritual endowments. Learn hence, That all fulness of grace, by way of supply for believers, is treasured up in Christ, and communicated by him, as their wants and necessities do require: his fulness is inexhaustible, it can never be drawn low, much less drawn dry: *Of his fulness do we receive grace for grace*: that is, grace freely, grace plentifully; God grant that none of us may receive the grace of Christ in vain. 3. John prefers Christ before Moses, whom the Jews doted so much upon. *The law was given by Moses*, not as the author, but as the dispenser of it. Moses

was God's minister, by whom the law, which reveals wrath, was given to the Jews; *but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*. *Grace*, in opposition to the condemnatory curse and sentence of the law; and *truth*, in opposition to the types, shadows, and ceremonies of the legal administration. Learn hence, That all grace for the remission of sin, and for performance of duty, is given from Christ, the Fountain of grace: *Grace came by Jesus Christ*. The grace of pardon and reconciliation; the grace of holiness and sanctification; the grace of love and adoption; even all that grace that fits us for service here, and glory hereafter. Christ is both the Dispenser and the Author of it. *Grace came by Jesus Christ*. Again, 4. John the Baptist here (ver. 18.) doth not only prefer Christ before himself, before Moses, before all believers, but even before all persons whatsoever, in point of knowing and revealing the mind of God. *No man hath seen God at any time*; that is, no mere man hath ever seen God in his essence, whilst he was in this mortal state. Here God's invisibility is asserted: next Christ's intimacy with the Father is declared. *The only-begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father*. This expression implies three things, 1. Unity of natures; the bosom is the child's place, who is part of ourselves, and of the same nature with ourselves. 2. Dearness of affection. None lie in the bosom, but the person that is dear to us. A bosom friend is the dearest of friends. 3. It implies communication of secrets. Christ's lying in his Father's bosom intimates his being conscious to all his Father's secrets, to know all his counsels, and to understand his whole will and pleasure. Now as Christ's lying in the Father's bosom implies unity of nature, it teaches us to give the same worship to Christ which we give to God the Father, because he is of the same nature with the Father. As it implies dearness of affection betwixt the Father and the Son, it teaches us to place our chief love upon Christ the Son, because God the Father doth so: he, who is the Son of God's love, should be the object of our love; as God hath a bosom for Christ, so should we have also; the noblest object challenges the highest affection. Again, as Christ's lying in the Father's bosom implies the knowledge of his mind and will, it teaches us to apply ourselves to Christ, to his word and Spirit, for illumination. Whither should we go for instruction, but to this great Prophet; for direction, but to

this wonderful Counsellor? We can never be made wise unto salvation, if Christ, the wisdom of the Father, doth not make us so.

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. 22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us: what sayest thou of thyself? 23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. 24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? 26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27 He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 28 These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing,

In these verses we have a second testimony which John the Baptist gave of our Saviour Jesus Christ. *The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, saying, Who art thou?* That is, the Sanhedrim, or great council at Jerusalem, to whom it belonged to judge who were true prophets, sent messengers to the Baptist to know, Whether he was the Messiah or not? John refuses to take this honour to himself, but tells them plainly, he was his harbinger and forerunner, and that the Messiah himself was just at hand. From hence note, How very cautious, and exceeding careful, this messenger of Christ was, and all the ministers of Christ ought to be, that they do not assume or arrogate to themselves any part of that honour which is due to Christ; but

set the crown of praise upon Christ's own head, acknowledging him to be all in all. 1 Cor. iii. 5. *Who then is Paul? and who is Apollos? but ministers by whom ye believed?* Observe farther, In this testimony of John the Baptist, these two things: 1. A negative declaration, who he was not; *I am not*, says the, *the Messiah* whom ye look for, *nor Elias*, nor that prophet you expect: not Elias, that is, in your sense, not Elias the Tishbite; not Elias for identity of person, but Elias for similitude of gifts, office, and calling. John came, though not in the person, yet in the power and spirit, of Elias. He denies farther, that he was *that prophet*: that prophet which Moses spake of, *Deut. xviii. 15.* nor any of the old prophets risen from the dead; nay, strictly speaking, he was not any prophet at all; *but more than a prophet*: The Old-Testament prophets prophesied of Christ to come; but John pointed at, showed, and declared a Christ already come; and in this sense he was no mere prophet, but more than a prophet. 2. We have here the Baptist's positive affirmation who he was; namely, Christ's herald in the wilderness, his usher, his forerunner to prepare the people for receiving of the Messiah, and to make them ready for the entertaining of the gospel, by preaching the doctrine of repentance to them. From hence learn, That the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is indispensably necessary, in order to the preparing of the hearts of sinners for the receiving of Jesus Christ. Observe lastly, The great and exemplary humility of the holy Baptist, the mean and lowly opinion he had of himself. Although John was the greatest among them that were born of a woman, and so much esteemed by the Jews, and had the honour to go before Christ in the exercise of his office and ministry; yet he judges himself unworthy to carry Christ's shoes after him: *He that cometh after me is preferred before me, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.* Learn hence, That the more eminent gifts the ministers of the gospel have, and the more ready men are to honour and esteem them, the more will they abase themselves, if they be truly gracious, and account themselves highly honoured in doing the meanest offices of love and service for Jesus Christ. Thus doth the holy Baptist here: *His shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

29 The next day John seeth Je-

pus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me : for he was before me.

This is John the Baptist's third testimony concerning Christ ; in which he points out Christ as the true Sacrifice for the expiation of sin. *Behold the Lamb of God* : the Lamb of God's appointing, to be an expiatory sacrifice ; the Lamb of God's election ; the Lamb of God's affection, the Lamb of God's acceptance ; the Lamb of God's exaltation ; who, by the sacrifice of his death, *has taken away the sin of the world*. The sin, not the sins, (in the plural number,) to denote original sin, as some think ; or, as others, to show, that Christ hath universally taken upon himself the whole burden of our sin and guilt. And there seems to be a secret antithesis in the word *world*. In the Levitical sacrifices, only the sins of the Jews were laid upon the sacrificed beast ; but this Lamb takes away the sin both of Jew and Gentile. *The Lord has caused to meet on him the iniquity of us all*. And the word, *taketh away*, being in the present tense, denotes a continued act, and it intimates to us thus much, viz. That it is the daily office of Christ to take away our sin, by presenting to the Father the memorials of his death. Christ takes away from all believers the guilt and punishment of their sins, the filth and pollution of them, the power and dominion that is in them : as St. John called upon the Jews, to behold this Lamb of God with an eye of observation ; so it is our duty to behold him now with an eye of admiration ; with an eye of gratulation ; but especially with an eye of faith and dependence, improving the fruit of his death to our own consolation and salvation, Isa. xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be saved*.

31 And I knew him not : but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not : but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said

unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

Observe here, 1. That though John the Baptist was a near kinsman of Christ, according to the flesh, yet the providence of God so ordered it, that for thirty years together they did not know one another, nor converse with each other, nor probably ever saw the faces of each other ; to be sure, he did not know him to be the Messiah. This, no doubt, was overruled by the wisdom of God to prevent all suspicion, as if John and Christ had compacted together to give one another credit ; that the world might suspect nothing of the truth of John's testimony concerning Christ, or have the least jealousy that what he said of Christ was from any bias of mind to his person, therefore he repeats it a second time, ver. 31, 33. *I knew him not*. Hence we may learn, That a corporal sight of Christ, and an outward personal acquaintance with him, is not simply needful, and absolutely necessary, for enabling a minister to set him forth, and represent him savingly to the world. Observe, 2. The means declared by which John came to know Christ to be the true Messiah ; it was by a sign from heaven, namely, The Holy Ghost descending like a dove upon our Saviour : *He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is he*. Learn hence, 1. That Christ, taking upon him our nature, did so cover his glory with the veil of our flesh and common infirmities, that he could not be known by bodily sight from another man. Till John had a divine revelation, and an evident sign from heaven, that Christ was the Son of God, *he knew him not*. Learn, 2. That Christ in his solemn entry upon his office, as Mediator, was sealed unto the work by the descending of the Holy Ghost upon him ; he was sealed by the Holy Ghost's descending, and the Father's testifying, that this was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. Now it was, that God gave not of the Spirit to Christ by measure, for the effectual administration of his mediatorial office ; now it pleased the Father, that in Christ should all fulness dwell. He was filled extensively with all kinds of grace, and

filled intensively with all degrees of grace, in the day of his inauguration, when the Holy Spirit descended upon him.

35 Again, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples ; 36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God !

It is evident that John's disciples were never very willing to acknowledge Jesus for the Messiah, because they thought he did shadow and cloud their Master. See therefore the sincerity of the holy Baptist ; he takes every opportunity to draw off the eyes of his own disciples from himself, and to fix them upon Christ ; he saith to two of his disciples, *Behold the Lamb of God* : as if he had said, " Turn your eyes from me to Christ, take less notice of me his minister ; but behold your and my Lord and Master, *Behold the Lamb of God*." Learn hence, That the great design of Christ's faithful ministers is to set people upon admiring of Christ, and not magnifying themselves. Oh ! 'tis their great ambition and desire, that such as love and respect them, and honour their ministry, may be led by them to Christ ; to behold and admire him, to accept of him, and to submit unto him : John said to his disciples, *Behold the Lamb of God*.

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye ? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou ? 39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day : for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, The Christ. 42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona ; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, A stone. 43 The day

following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. 44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

This latter part of the chapter acquaints us with the calling of five disciples ; not to the apostleship, for that was afterwards ; nor yet simply by conversion, for some of them were John's disciples already, and believed in the Messiah to come ; but they are here called to own and acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the true and promised Messiah. The disciples here called were Andrew, Peter, and Philip, mean and obscure persons, poor fishermen, not any of the learned rabbies and doctors among the Jews. Hereby Christ showed at once the freeness of his grace, in passing by the knowing men of the age ; the greatness of his power, who by such weak instruments could effect such mighty things ; and the glory of his wisdom, in choosing such instruments as should not carry away the glory of the work from him ; but cause the entire honour and glory of all their great successes to redound to Christ. As Christ can do, so he chooses to do, great things by weak means, knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honour of the agent ; for these persons now called to be disciples, were afterwards sent forth by Christ as his apostles, to convert the world to christianity. Observe farther, The order according to which the disciples were called : first, Andrew, then Peter ; (which may make the church of Rome ashamed of the weakness of their argument for Peter's supremacy, that he was first called ; whereas Andrew was before him, and Peter was brought to Jesus by him.) *Andrew findeth his own brother Simon*, and brought him to Jesus. Such as have gotten any knowledge of Christ themselves, and are let into acquaintance with him, will be very diligent to invite, and industrious to bring in, others to him. Peter being brought to Christ, our Saviour names him *Cephas*, which signifies a *stone*, a *rock* ; to intimate to him his duty to be firm and steady in the christian profession, full of courage and constancy. *Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone*.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the

prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

The last person mentioned in this chapter, who was called to own and embrace Christ for the Messiah, is Nathanael: who this Nathanael was, doth not certainly appear; but, it is evident, he was a sincere, good man, though prejudiced for the present against Christ, because of the place of his supposed birth and residence, Nazareth: *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* That is, can any worthy or excellent person, much less the promised and long-expected Messiah, come out of such an obscure place as Nazareth is? Whereas Almighty God, whenever he pleases, can raise worthy persons out of contemptible places. Observe farther, How mercifully and meekly Christ passes over the mistakes and failings, the prepossessions and prejudices, of Nathanael; but takes notice of and publicly proclaims his sincerity: *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!* That is, no guile imputed, no guile concealed, no prevailing guile. It being only true of Christ, in a strict and absolute sense, that there was no guile found in his lips; but, in a qualified sense, it is true of Nathanael, and every upright man: they are true Israelites, like their father Jacob, plain men; men of great sincerity and uprightness of heart, both in the sight of God and man. And whereas our Saviour speaks of him with a sort of admiration, *Behold an Israelite in whom is no guile!* We learn, That a person of great sincerity and uprightness of heart towards God and man, a true Nathanael, an Israelite indeed, is a rare and worthy sight, *Behold an Israelite indeed!* Learn, 2. That such indeed as are Nathanaels, need not commend themselves; Christ will be sure to do it for them. Nathanael conceals his own worth: Christ publishes and proclaims it, and calls upon others to take notice of it. *Behold, &c.*

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before

that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. 50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

Observe here, How Nathanael wondereth that Christ should know him, having (as he thought) never seen him. Christ gives him to understand, that by his all-seeing eye he had seen him, when he was not seen by him: *When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee.* Christ's all-seeing eye is an infallible proof of his deity and god-head. Christ seeth us whatever we do, though we see not him. He seeth the sincerity of our hearts, and will own it, and bear witness to it, if we are upright in his sight. Observe farther, How Christ's omnipresence and omniscience convinces Nathanael that he was more than man, even the Messiah, God and man in two distinct natures and one person. *Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God.* Philip called Christ the son of Joseph; Nathanael calls him the Son of God. Such as believe Christ's omniscience, will never call in question his divinity. Observe lastly, How Christ encourages the faith of this new disciple Nathanael, by promising him that he shall enjoy farther helps and means for the confirmation of his faith, than ever yet he had. All that Christ said to him, was only this, that *he saw him under the fig-tree, before Philip called him.* How ready art thou, O Lord! to encourage the beginnings of faith in the hearts of thy people, and to furnish them with farther means of knowledge, when they wisely improve what they have received! Never wilt thou be wanting, either in means or mercy to us, if we be not wanting to thee and ourselves.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

The heavens were open to Christ, and the angels attended upon him, first at his baptism, *Matt. iii. ult.* then at his ascension, *Acts i. 9.* Whether Christ alludes to the one or the other, or to both, I shall not posi-



tively say; but gather this note, That the ministry and attendance of the holy angels upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in the time of his humiliation, was very remarkable: An angel foretells his conception to the Virgin, *Luke i. 31.* An angel publishes his birth to the shepherds, *Luke ii. 14.* In his temptations in the wilderness, the angels came and ministered unto him, *Matt. iv. 11.* In his agony in the garden, an angel is sent to comfort him, *Luke xxii. 42.* At his resurrection an angel rolls away the stone, and proclaims him risen to the women that sought for him, *Matt. xxviii. 6.* At his ascension, the angels attended upon him, and bore him company to heaven. And at the day of judgment, he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. Now, thus officious are the holy angels to our blessed Saviour, and thus subservient to him upon all occasions. 1. In point of affection and singular love to Christ. 2. In point of duty and special obligation to Christ. There is no such cheerful and delightful service, as the service of love. Such is the angels' service to Christ for the services he has done them, he being an Head of confirmation to them: For, that they are established in that holy and glorious state in which they were at first created, is owing to the special grace of the Redeemer: *Glorify him then, all ye angels, and praise him all his host.*

## CHAP. II.

AND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2 And both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with the first miracle which our Saviour wrought, in turning water into wine; the occasion of it was, his being invited to a marriage-feast. Here note, 1. That whenever our Saviour was invited to a public entertainment, he never refused the invitation, but constantly went; not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good, which was meat and drink unto him. Note, 2. What honour Christ put upon the ordinance of marriage; he honours it with his presence and first miracle. Some think it was St. John that was now the bridegroom; others, that it was some near relation of the virgin mother's; but whoever it might be, doubt-

less Christ's design was rather to put honour upon the ordinance than upon the person. How bold is the church of Rome in spitting upon the face of this ordinance, by denying its lawfulness to the ministers of religion! When the apostle, *Heb. xiii. 4.* affirms that *marriage is honourable among all.* Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the apostles of the New, (St. Peter himself not excepted,) did abhor the marriage-bed, or judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. Note, 3. That it is an ancient and laudable institution, that the rites of marriage should not want a solemn celebration. Feasting with friends upon such an occasion is both lawful and commendable, provided the rules of sobriety and charity, modesty and decency, be observed, and no sinful liberty assumed. But it must be said, that feasting in general, and marriage-feasts in particular, are some of those lawful things which are difficultly managed without sin. Note, 4. That our Saviour's working a miracle when he was at the marriage-feast, should teach us, by his example, that in our cheerful and free times, when we indulge a little more than ordinary to mirth amongst our friends, we should still be mindful of God's honour and glory, and lay hold upon an occasion of doing all the good we can. Note lastly, As Christ was personally invited to, and bodily present at this marriage-feast when here on earth; so he will not refuse now in heaven to be spiritually present at his people's marriages. They want his presence with them upon that great occasion, they desire and seek it; he is acquainted with it, and invited to it, whoever is neglected; and where Christ is made acquainted with the match, he will certainly make one at the marriage. Happy is that wedding where Christ and his friends (as here) are the invited, expected, and enjoyed guests.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. 4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. 5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

This want of wine was probably so disposed by the providence of God, to give our Saviour an opportunity to manifest his divine power in working a miracle to supply it. Observe here, 1. How the Virgin

enquires into the family's wants, and then makes them known to Christ. Learn hence, That it is an argument of piety, and an evidence of christian love, to enquire into the wants, and to recommend the necessities of others to Christ's care and consideration; whose bounty and munificence can readily and abundantly supply them. Thus far the Virgin's action was good: she laid open the case to Christ: *They have no wine.* But Christ, who discerned the thoughts of Mary's heart, finds her guilty of presumption; she thought by her motherly authority, she might have expected, if not commanded, a miracle from him: whereas Christ was subject to her as a man during his private life: but now being entered upon his office as a mediator, as God-man, he gives her to understand she had no power over him, nor any motherly authority in the business of his public office; therefore he says to her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* He that charges his angels with folly, will not be taught when and how to act by poor crawling dust and ashes. Observe therefore, 2. Christ calls the Virgin, *Woman*, not *Mother*; but this was not out of any contempt, but to prevent her being thought more than a woman, above or beyond a woman, having brought forth the Son of God. *Woman*, says Christ; not *Goddess*, as the Papists would make her, and proclaim her free from sin, even from venial sin; but Christ's reproving her shows her that she was not faultless. Observe, 3. Christ would not bear with the Virgin's commanding on earth, will he then endure her intercession in heaven? Must she not meddle with matters appertaining to his office here below, and will it be endured by Christ, or endeavoured by her, to interpose in the work of mediation above? No, no; were it possible for her so far to forget herself in heaven, she would receive the answer from Christ which she had on earth, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* or thou with me, in my mediatorial office? But instead of this, she returns answer from heaven to her idolatrous petitioners here on earth, "What have I to do with thee? Get you to my Son, go you to Christ, he that was the Mediator of redemption; he, and only he, continues the Mediator of intercession." O how foolish, as well as impious, is it to think, that she who had not so much power as to direct the working of one miracle on earth, should have now lodged in her hands all the power of heaven!

6 And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, 10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

In this miracle of our Saviour's turning water into wine, Observe, 1. The reality of the miracle, and the sincerity of Christ in the working of it. To evidence there was no deceit in the miracle, not wine-casks, but water-pots, are called for; wine-vessels, in which some lees were remaining, might have given both a vinous colour and taste to the water; but stone-pots could contribute nothing of this nature; and being open pots, there was no stealing wine into them without observation. Again, our Saviour's employing the servants, and not his disciples, takes off any suspicion of collusion; and his sending it to the ruler or governor of the feast, was an evidence that the miracle would bear examination. Our Saviour's miracles were real and beneficial; they were obvious to sense, not lying wonders, nor fictitious miracles, which the jugglers in the church of Rome cheat the people with. The greatest miracle which they boast of, *transubstantiation*, is so far from being obvious to sense, that it contradicts the sense and reason of mankind, and is the greatest affront to human nature that ever the world was acquainted with. Observe, 2. Though Christ wrought a real miracle, yet he would not work more of miracle than needed; he would not create

wine out of nothing, but turned water into wine. Thus he multiplied the bread, changed the water, restored withered limbs, raised dead bodies, still working upon that which was, and not creating that which was not: Christ never wrought a miracle but when needful, and then wrought no more of miracle than he needed. Observe,

3. The liberality and bounty of Christ in the miracle here wrought; six water-pots are filled with wine! enough, say some writers, for an hundred and fifty men; had he turned but one of those large vessels into wine, it had been a sufficient proof of his power; but to fill so many, was an instance both of his power and mercy. The Lord of the family furnishes his household not barely for necessity, but for delight, giving richly all things to enjoy. And as the bounty of Christ appeared in the quantity, so in the excellency, of the wine; *Thou hast kept the best wine until now*, says the governor of the feast. It was fit that Christ's miraculous wine should be more perfect than the natural. But, O blessed Saviour, how delicate and delicious shall that wine be, which we shall drink ere long, with thee in thy Father's kingdom! Let thy Holy Spirit fill the vessel of my heart with water, with godly sorrow and contrition,) and thou wilt turn it into wine. *For blessed are they that mourn, they shall be comforted.* Observe, 4. The double effects of this miracle; Christ hereby manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him. 1. *He manifested forth his glory*; that is, the glory of his godhead, as doing this by his own power. Here shined forth his omnipotence, his bounty and liberality, every thing that might bespeak him both a great and good God. The second effect of this miracle was, that the *disciples believed on him*. The great end of miracles is the confirmation of faith; God never sets the seals of his omnipotence to a lie; all the miracles then that Christ and his apostles did, were as so many seals that the doctrine of the gospel is true. *If you believe not me*, says Christ, *believe the works which I do, for they bear witness of me*, John v. 36.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days. 13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to

Jerusalem, 14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

Observe here, 1. How obedient in all things Christ was to the ceremonial law. He was not naturally subject to the law, but, to fulfil all righteousness, he kept the passover yearly, according to the command of God, *Exod. xxiii. 17.* That *all the males should appear before him* in the temple at Jerusalem. Hence it is probably concluded, that Christ came up to the passover continually during his private life; and being now come up to Jerusalem to this first passover after his baptism, and solemn entrance upon his office, his first walk was to the temple, and his first work was to purge and reform it from abuses, not to ruin and destroy it, because it had been abused. Now the abuse and profanation of the temple at that time was this: in the outward court of the Gentiles, there was a public mart or market, where were sold oxen, sheep, and doves, for sacrifice; which otherwise the people, with great labour and trouble, must have brought up along with them for sacrifice. Therefore as a pretended ease to the people, the priests ordered these things to be sold hard by the altar; the intention was commendable, but the action not justifiable. No pretence of good ends can justify that which is forbidden of God: a good end can never justify an irregular action. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's fervent zeal in purging and reforming his Father's house. The sight of sin in any persons, but especially in and among professors, ought to kindle in our hearts (as it did here in Christ's breast) a burning zeal and indignation against it. Yet was not Christ's zeal so warm as to devote the temple to destruction, because of its abuse and profanation. Places dedicated to the worship and service of God, if idolatrously abused, must not be pulled down, but purged; not ruined, but reformed. There is a special reverence due to the house of God, both for the Owner's

sake, and the service' sake. Nothing but holiness becomes that place, where God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness. Christ by purging the court of the Gentiles from merchandise, not unlawful in itself, but necessary for the sacrifices which were offered in the temple, though not necessary to be brought there, did plainly insinuate, that a distinction is to be made betwixt places sacred and profane; and that what may be done as well elsewhere, ought not to be done in the house of God, the place appointed immediately for his worship. Observe, 3. The greatness of this miracle, in the weakness of the means which Christ made use of to effect and work it: he drove the buyers and sellers before him out of the temple. But how and with what? St. Jerome, in *Matt. xxi.* says, That certain fiery rays or beams, darting from Christ's eyes, drove out these merchants from this place. I dare not avouch this, but I am satisfied that Christ drove them out, unarmed with any weapons that might carry dread and terror with them, at most but with a whip of small cords; which probably might be scattered by the drovers that came thither to sell their cattle. Behold then the weakness of the means on the one side, and consider the greatness of the opposition on the other. Here was a confluence of people to oppose Christ, this being the most solemn mart of the passover, and here were merchant-men, whose hearts were set upon gain (the world's god) to oppose him. But neither the weakness of the means, nor the greatness of the opposition, did dismay him, or cause our Saviour to desist from the attempt of reforming what was amiss in the house of God. Learn we hence, That it matters not how weak the means of the church-reformation is, nor how strong the opposing power is; if we engage Christ in the undertaking, the work shall certainly be accomplished. O, how great was the work, and how weak and unlikely were the means here! a parcel of sturdy fellows, whose hearts were set upon their wealth, Christ no sooner speaks to them, and shakes his whip at them, but like a company of fearful hares they run before him. Christ, in purging of his church, will make every thing yield and give way to his power. Let it comfort the church under all unlikelihood of reformation. Who art thou, O great mountain? before our spiritual Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain. I shall close my observations upon this miracle of Christ's whipping the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which both

Origen and St. Jerome do make the greatest miracle that ever Christ wrought, all circumstances considered; I shall close it with this reflection, viz. Was there such power and terror in Christ's countenance and speech here in the temple in the days of his flesh? Oh, how terrible then will his face and his appearance be to the wicked and impenitent world at the great day! Lord! how fearful will his iron scourge then be; how terrifying that voice, "Depart, depart from me, depart accursed, depart into fire: depart into everlasting fire, into a fire prepared for the punishment of apostate spirits, the devil and his angels!" God grant we may wisely consider it, and timely flee from the wrath to come.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

The disciples upon this occasion called to remembrance the words of David, *Psalm lxxix. 9. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*: which was verified in Christ as well as in David. Where observe, 1. The grace described, *zeal*, which is the ardour of the affections, carrying forth a man to the utmost for God's glory, and his church's good. Zeal is not so much one affection, as the intense degree of all the affections. Observe, 2. The object about which our Saviour's zeal was conversant, *God's house*, that is, all things relating to the worship of God, temple, tabernacle, ark, &c. which were the pledges of God's presence. *Obs. 3.* The effect of this, it *hath eaten me up*, like fire that eats up and devours that whereon it lights. What was said of St. Peter, That he was a man made up all of fire; and of St. Paul in respect of his sufferings, that he was a spark of fire burning in the midst of the sea, may much more truly be said of Christ, when he was engaged in the work of church-reformation. Learn, That as Christ was, so Christians ought to be, very zealous for the glory of God, the honour of his house, and the purity of his worship. *The zeal of thine house*, that is, for the honour of thine house, *hath eaten me up, &c.*

18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? 19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will

raise it up. 20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21 But he spake of the temple of his body. 22 When therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said,

Observe here, 1. How exceedingly offended the Jews were at the reformation which our Saviour had made in the house of God; they were awed indeed with the majesty of this great work, and durst not openly oppose, but secretly malign it. Thence note, That redress of abuses in God's worship, especially if it crosses our ease, and controls our profit, (as this did,) is usually distasteful. Observe, 2. How these Jews discover their old inveterate disease of infidelity; they require a sign, and call for a miracle to justify Christ's commission. Why! had they not a miracle before their eyes? Was not the work of purging the temple a wonderful miracle? Yet they demanded another miracle to make this good. Learn thence, That obstinate infidelity will not be satisfied with the most sufficient means for satisfaction, but still object and oppose against the clearest, the fullest, and most convincing evidence. *What sign shewest thou us?* say the Jews, when they had so many signs and wonders daily before their eyes. Observe, 3. The Jews demanding a sign, our Saviour grants them one; he remits them to his death and resurrection, to prove that he was the true Messiah. *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.* That is, "I know you will destroy this temple of my body, by putting me to death; but I will raise myself again from the grave the third day." Christ did not command them to destroy his body, but only foretold that they would do it. *Non est verbum Præcepti, sed Prædictionis*: "The words are not imperative, but only predictive and permissive." Christ did not bid them destroy his body, but foretells what they would do. "Ye will destroy this temple, but after three days I will raise it up." Where note, That Christ asserts his own power in raising his own body from the dead. True! The Father is often said to raise him, and it is necessary that it be so said, that it might appear that divine justice

was fully satisfied for our sins, in that he was by him delivered from that death which he underwent for us. But yet it is often asserted, That Christ raised himself, and that he was quickened by the Spirit, which was as well the Spirit of the Son, as of the Father, dwelling essentially in him. Now from Christ's foretelling his passion and resurrection, learn thence, that all our Saviour's sufferings were foreknown unto him, were foretold by him; he would not prevent them, but willingly permitted them, and cheerfully underwent them. *Destroy this temple.* Note here, 1. The state and dignity of Christ's holy body: 'Tis a temple. *He spake of the temple of his body.* The saints' bodies are temples by special sanctification: Christ's body was a temple by substantial inhabitation. The divinity of Christ dwelt in his humanity personally and immediately. God dwells in saints by regal authority: he dwelt in Christ's humanity by personal residence. Note, 2. The violence and indignity offered to this holy temple at our Saviour's death, it was pulled down and destroyed; death dissolved the union betwixt our Saviour's soul and body; but there was a closer union, which no violence of death could dissolve: namely, the union of his godhead with his manhood; this was incapable either of dissolution or destruction. Note, 3. The repairing, restoring, and raising up of this temple out of the ruins of it, by our Saviour's resurrection. *In three days I will raise it up.* Observe, A full proof of our Saviour's divinity. To raise a dead man exceeds the power of nature; but for a dead man to raise himself, requires the power of God. We read of dead men raised by others; but none but Christ ever raised himself. The Jews could not say, he raised others from the grave, himself he could not raise. Inference, 1. Was Christ's body a temple? so shall ours be too; temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. Temples by special appropriation, temples by solemn consecration, temples by actual employment: *If any man defile this temple, him will God destroy.* 2. Was the temple of Christ's body pulled down by death, and destroyed; so must also the temples of our bodies ere long. The temple of his body was pulled down for our sin; the temples of our bodies ruined by our sin. Sin brought mortality into our natures, and the wages of our sin is death. 3. Was the temple of Christ's body repaired in the morning of the resurrection? so shall the

temple of our bodies also, if we be the members of Christ by a vital union. *Thy dead men, O blessed Redeemer! shall live; together with thy dead body shall they arise. Awake then and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for the dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead, Isa. xxvi. 19.*

23 Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.

Observe here, What influence the sight of our Saviour's miracles had upon many of the common people, *They believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did*; that is, they were convinced by the works which our Saviour wrought that he came from God, and what he said and did was really true, and no imposture. *But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.* Our Saviour did not, and would not trust them who yet believed on his name. Thence note, That a naked assent to the history of the gospel is not sufficient to entitle us to saving faith. We may assent to the truth of all that we find there, and yet be far from the kingdom of God. Saving faith implies more than the assent of the understanding to the truths of the gospel. We cannot believe or disbelieve what we please, but must needs assent to what is evident to our understanding; so that it is possible for a man to assent to the truth of christianity and yet remain in a state of damnation. If he doth not embrace it as good, as well as assent to it as true; if our faith be not the parent and principle of obedience; if our belief doth not influence our practice; though we pass for believers amongst men, we are no better than unbelievers in the account of Christ. If we believe Jesus to be the true Messiah, and do not receive him in all his offices; if we commit ourselves to his saving mercy, but do not submit ourselves to his ruling power; if we desire him for our Saviour, but disown him for our sovereign; if we expect salvation by him, and do not yield subjection to him; we put a cheat upon ourselves: for he only believes as he should, that lives as he does believe.

25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

St. John's design in writing of this gospel being to assert the divinity of Christ, he scatters evidences of it in almost every chapter. Here he declares his omniscience, *He knew what was in man*; that is, being God blessed for ever, he had an exact knowledge of the hearts of men, not by any revelation of men's hearts from God, but by immediate intuition from himself. He knows all men, and all that is in men. See here an ample testimony of the divinity of Christ, his knowledge of the secrets of the hearts of all men, which is declared to be the undoubted property of God alone, 1 Kings viii. 39. *Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men.*

### CHAP. III.

**T**HERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with that famous conference which our blessed Saviour had with Nicodemus. This man was by sect a Pharisee; which signifies a person separated and set apart for the study of the law of God, and to teach it unto others; and by calling or profession a ruler of the Jews, that is probably one of the Jews' Sanhedrim, a chief person in their ecclesiastical court and council. Consider we Nicodemus first as a Pharisee, which sort of men were filled with inveterate prejudice and enmity against Christ: yet from hence we may gather, that such is the efficacy of divine grace, that it sometimes convinces and converts also those that are the greatest enemies to Christ, and fiercest opposers of him. No such bitter enemies to Christ as the Pharisees; yet behold Nicodemus, a Pharisee, coming to him, convinced and converted by him! Consider him, secondly, as a ruler of the Jews, as a person of place and power, making a figure in the world. Though they were generally the poor which followed Christ, yet some of the great and rich men of the world, as Nicodemus, a master of Is-

rael, and Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, are called to Christ, and received by him: lest, if he had admitted illiterate and simple men only, the world might have thought that they were deceived through their simplicity. Observe farther, The time when Nicodemus came to Christ: it was by night, partly out of shame, lest the world should think that such a knowing man as he was, wanted instruction; and partly out of fear; he had something to lose, and therefore durst not own Christ publicly. However, our dear Lord upbraids him not with his timorousness, but graciously condescends to instruct him in the fundamental principle of christianity, the great doctrine of regeneration. Such is the tenderness of our compassionate Saviour, that he will not extinguish the least spark of holy fire, nor quench the smoking flax.

3 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Christ here acquaints Nicodemus, and in him all persons, That there must be a change from nature to grace, before there can be a change from grace to glory; for though he was a Jew, a doctor, and one that had good thoughts of Christ, looking upon him as an extraordinary person, one that had received power from God to work miracles; yet Christ assures him, that nothing short of the regenerating change would bring him to heaven. 'Tis not enough that we be new dressed, but we must be new made; that is, thoroughly and universally changed, the understanding by illumination, the will by renovation, the affections by sanctification, the life by reformation, or we can never come at heaven: we must be like God, or we can never live with him; if we be not like him in the temper of our minds on earth, we can never be happy in the enjoyment of him in heaven; for heaven, which is a place of the greatest holiness, would be a place of the greatest uneasiness to an unregenerate and an unholy person: the contagion is universal, deep, and inward, therefore such must the change be.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Two things are observable in this question of Nicodemus, *How can a man be born when he is old?* 1. His ignorance and weakness in propounding of such a question. So true is that of the apostle, 1. Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.* What a gross conception had this learned man of the notion of regeneration! How ignorant is nature of the workings of grace! Men of name and note, of great parts and profound learning, are very often much at a loss in spiritual matters. Yet, 2. In this question of his, there is discovered a great deal of plainness and simplicity: he did not come, as usually the Pharisees did, with an ensnaring question in his mouth, but with a mind fairly disposed for information and conviction; with a pious desire to be instructed. Whatever ignorance we labour under, it is safest and best to discover it to our spiritual guide, that we may attain the mercy of a saving knowledge; but how many had rather carry their ignorance to hell with them, than discover it to their minister!

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus not rightly understanding Christ's meaning in the former verse, our Saviour is pleased to explain himself in this, and tells him, That the birth he spake of was not natural, but spiritual, wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, whose working is like water, cleansing and purifying the soul from all sinful defilement. Learn hence, That the regenerating change is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, which purifies it from its natural defilement, and renews it after the divine likeness and image. We never understand divine truths aright, till Christ opens our understandings; till then they will be denied, nay perhaps derided, even by those that are profoundly learned.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

As if Christ had said, "As men generate men, and nature begets nature, so the Holy Spirit produceth holy inclinations, qualifications, and dispositions." Learn hence, That as original corruption is conveyed by natural generation, so saving re-

generation is the effect and product of the Holy Spirit's operation.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus making an exception against our Saviour's notion of regeneration, from the absurdity and impossibility of it, (as he thought,) our Saviour therefore proceeds to clear the matter by a similitude taken from the wind, which at once declares the author and describes the manner of spiritual regeneration. The author of it is the Holy Spirit of God, compared to the wind; First, for the quality of its motion, *It blows when and where it listeth*. Secondly, From the sensibleness of its effect, *Thou hearest the sound thereof*. Thirdly, From the intricacy or mysteriousness of its proceeding, *Thou knowest not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth*. As the natural wind is not under the power of man, either to send it out or restrain it; it bloweth where it listeth for all us, tho' not where it listeth in regard to God. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is as wind in the freeness of its motion, and in the variableness of its motion also. Learn hence, That the way and work of the Holy Spirit of God, in the soul's regeneration, is oft-times very secret, and usually exceeding various. Various as to the time: some are wrought upon in youth, others in old age. Various in his methods of working; some are wrought upon by the corrosives of the law, others by the lenitives of the gospel. Various in the manner of his working, and in the means by which he works: upon some by a powerful ordinance, upon others by an awakening providence. But though there be such variety in the method of the Spirit's working, yet is the work in all still the same. There is no variety in the work wrought. The effect produced by the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration is alike, and the same in all; namely, likeness to God; a conformity in our natures to the holy nature of God; and a conformity in our lives to the will of God. Again, It is a very secret work, and therefore compared to the wind. We hear the wind blow, we feel it blow, we observe its mighty force, and admire its strange effects; but we can-

not describe its nature, nor declare its original. Thus the Holy Spirit in a secret and hidden manner quickens and influences our souls. The effects of its operations we sensibly discern; but how and after what manner he doth it, we know no more than how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child. Therefore it is called an hidden life, Col. iii. 2. It is not only totally hidden from carnal men, but in part hidden and unknown to spiritual men, though they themselves are the subject of it.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel; and knowest not these things? 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things.

Observe here, 1. How Nicodemus, consulting only with carnal reason, persists in his apprehension concerning the absurdity and impossibility of our Saviour's notion of regeneration, or being born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said, *How can these things be?* Learn hence, That the great cause of men's ignorance in matters of salvation, and the mysteries of religion, is consulting their own natural reason without submitting their understandings to the authority of divine revelation. Till they can give a reason for every thing they believe, they cry out with Nicodemus, *How can these things be?* Whereas, though we cannot give a reason for all gospel mysteries which we believe, we can give a good reason why we believe them, namely, because God hath revealed them. No man can be a christian who refuses to submit his understanding to the authority of divine revelation. Observe, 2. How our Saviour reproves Nicodemus for, and upbraids him with, his ignorance, ver. 10. and his infidelity, ver. 12. First his ignorance is reproved, *Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?* As if Christ had said, "Ignorance in any, as to the fundamentals of religion, is shameful, though but in a common learner, much more in a teacher and master, and he a teacher and master in Israel: now thou art one of them, and yet knowest not these



things! Learn hence, 1. That a man may be very knowing himself, and take upon him to teach and instruct others, and yet be very ignorant of the nature, and much unacquainted with the work, of regeneration upon his own soul: a man may be very sharp-sighted, as the eagle, in the mysteries of art and nature, and yet blind as a mole in the things of God. 2. That ignorance, in the fundamentals of religion especially, is very culpable and shameful in any that enjoy the means of knowledge, but especially in those that undertake to teach and instruct others. *Art thou a teacher, thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?* Next, our Saviour upbraids him for his infidelity, ver. 12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not.* This infidelity received its aggravation from the facility, and perspicuity of our Saviour's doctrine. I have told you earthly things; that is, I have set forth spiritual things by earthly similitudes, not in a style suitable to the sublimity of their own nature. Let the ministers of Christ learn from their master's example, in all their discourses to accommodate themselves, and descend as low as may be, to the capacities of their people: *I have told you earthly things.* 2. That even spiritual things, when they are shadowed forth by earthly similitudes, and brought down in the plainest manner to the capacities of their people, yet are they very slow to understand them, and very backward to believe them. *I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe them not.*

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Here our Saviour declares to Nicodemus, That none ever ascended up into heaven, to fetch down from thence the knowledge of divine mysteries, and to reveal the way of life and salvation to mankind by a Mediator, but only Christ himself; who, though he took upon him the human nature, and was then man upon earth, yet was he at the same time in his divine nature actually in heaven with God. This text evidently proves two distinct natures in Christ; namely, a divine nature as he was God, and an human nature as man. In his human nature, he was then upon earth, when he spake these words; in his divine nature, he was at that instant in heaven. Here

observe, That the Son of God hath taken the human nature, into so close and intimate a union with his godhead, and what is proper to either nature is ascribed unto the person of our Saviour. The same person who was on earth as the Son of man, who was then in heaven as God, and yet but one person still. Lord! what love hast thou shown to our human nature, that under that name thou ascribest to thyself what is proper to thy Godhead! *The Son of man which is in heaven.* The Socinians produce this text, to prove that Christ after his baptism was taken up into heaven, there to be made acquainted with the will of God, to fit him for the execution of his prophetic office here on earth, and that for this reason he was said to be *in the beginning with God*, as Moses before him was taken up into the mount, and taught by God. But, 1. We have not the least word of any such thing in Scripture, though we have a particular account of our Saviour's birth, circumcision, baptism, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, yea, of small things compared with this; as his flight into Egypt, his sitting on a pinnacle of the temple; yet not a word of his assumption into heaven. 2. There was no need of it, because Almighty God could reveal himself to Christ, as well as to other prophets, out of heaven as well as in it: besides, Christ was fitted for his prophetic office by the unction of the Spirit he received here on earth; and therefore this ascent was altogether needless.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Christ having instructed Nicodemus in the doctrine of regeneration in the former verses, here he instructs him in the death of the Messiah, and in the necessity of faith in his death. *The Son of man must be lifted up*; that is, upon the cross, and die; *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.* Observe here, 1. An Old Testament type which our Saviour refers to, and that is, the brazen serpent in the wilderness, the history of which is recorded, *Numb. xxi. 7, 8.* 2. The antitype, or the substance of what that type did shadow forth: the brazen serpent's lifting up upon the pole, prefiguring Christ's exaltation or

lifting up upon the cross. *So must the Son of man be lifted up.* Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ is of the same use and office to a sin-stung soul, which the brazen serpent was of old to a serpent-stung Israelite. Here observe, 1. Wherein the brazen serpent and Christ do agree. And, 2. wherein they differ. They agree thus: In the *occasion* of their institution; they were both appointed for cure and healing. Were they serpent-stung? we are sin-stung; devil-bitten. Was the sting of the fiery serpent inflaming? Was it spreading? Was it killing? So is sin, which is the venom and poison of the old serpent. They agree in this; that they both must be *lifted up* before cure could be obtained; the brazen serpent upon the pole, Christ upon the cross. They both must be *looked unto* before cure could be obtained; the looking up of the Israelites was as necessary unto healing, as the lifting up of the serpent. Faith is as necessary to salvation as the death of Christ. The one renders God reconcilable unto sinners, the other renders him actually reconciled. Again, did the brazen serpent heal *all* that *looked* upon it, and looked up unto it, though all had not eyes alike, some with a weak, others with a stronger eye? In like manner doth Christ justify and save *all*, that with a sincere faith, though weak, do rely upon him for salvation; *Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish.* Further, the brazen serpent was effectual for Israel's cure after many stings; If after they were healed they were stung afresh, and did look up to it, they were healed by it. Thus the merit of Christ's death is not only effectual for our cure and healing at our first conversion, but after involuntary relapses and backslidings, if by faith we have recourse to the blood of Christ, we shall find it efficacious for our further benefit and future healing. In a word, as the brazen serpent had the likeness of a serpent, the form, the figure, the name, the colour of the serpent, but nothing of the venom and poison of the serpent in it; so Christ did take upon him our nature; but sin, the venom and poison of our nature, he had nothing to do with: though Christ loved souls with an invincible and insuperable love, yet he would not sin to save a soul. This was the similitude and resemblance between Christ and the brazen serpent. The disparity or dissimilitude follows: The brazen serpent had no power in itself, or of itself, to heal and cure; but Christ has a power inherent in

himself, for the curing and healing of all that do believe in him. Again, The brazen serpent cured only one particular nation and people, Jews only; Christ is for the healing of all nations, and his salvation is to the end of the earth. Further, The brazen serpent cured only one particular disease; namely, the stinging of the fiery serpents: had a person been sick of the plague, or leprosy, he might have died, for all the brazen serpent: but Christ pardons all the iniquities, and heals all the diseases of his people, Psal. cii. 3. Yet again, Though the brazen serpent healed all that looked up unto it, yet it gave an eye to none to look up unto it; whereas Christ doth not only heal them that look up to him, but bestows the eye of faith upon them, to enable them to look unto him that they may be saved. In a word, the brazen serpent did not always retain its healing virtue, but in time lost it, and was itself destroyed, 2 Kings xviii. 4. But now the healing virtue and efficacy of Christ's blood is eternal. All believers have and shall experience the healing power of our Redeemer's death to the end of the world. Lastly, The Israelites that were cured by looking up to the brazen serpent, died afterwards; some distemper or other soon carried them to their graves: but the soul of the believer that is healed by Christ shall never die more; *Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Here observe, 1. The original source and fountain of man's salvation; and that is, God's free and undeserved, his great and wonderful love. *God so loved the world:* he doth not say how much, but leaves it to our most solemn raised thoughts; it is rather to be conceived than declared; and admired rather than conceived. *God so loved the world:* Hence note, That the original spring and first cause of our salvation is the free favour and mere love of God; a love worthy of God from whom it proceeds, even love inexpressible and inconceivable. Observe, 2. The greatness of the gift by which God evidenced and demonstrated the greatness of his love to a lost world. *He gave his only begotten Son:* that is, he delivered him out of his own bosom and everlasting

embraces. Now this will appear a stupendous expression of God's love, if we consider that God gave *him* who was not only the greatest, but the dearest person to him in the world, even *his own Son*: that he gave him for sinners; that he gave him for a world of sinners; that he gave him up to become a man for sinners; that he gave him up to become a miserable man for sinners; that he gave him up to be a sacrifice for the sin of sinners. Observe, 3. The gracious end for which God gave this great gift of his love to lost sinners: *That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Where note, 1. The gentle and merciful condition upon which salvation depends: *Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish.* 2. The infinite goodness of God in proposing such a vast reward unto us, upon our performing of this condition; *He shall have everlasting life.* Learn hence, That faith is the way which God hath appointed, and the condition which God hath required, in order to our obtaining salvation by Jesus Christ. This faith consists in the assent of the understanding, that Jesus is the Saviour of the world; in the consent of the will, to accept of Jesus freely and voluntarily, deliberately, advisedly, and resolvedly, for our Saviour; in accepting the merit of his blood, and submitting to the authority of his laws; it being in vain to expect salvation by Christ, if we do not yield subjection to him; he that thus *believes in Christ*, that submits himself to his ruling power, as well as commits himself to his saving mercy, *shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Observe here, That the salvation of sinners was the intentional end, and the condemnation of them only the accidental event, of Christ's coming into the world. The design of Christ's first coming into the world was to save it. The end of his second coming will be to judge the unbelieving part of it. Observe secondly, That

unbelief is the formal cause of the sinner's damnation; it is that sin which doth bind all other sins upon the sinner, and consigns him over to damnation; it is that sin which doth not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it; which is intimated in the next verse.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Observe, here 1. The worth and dignity of a choice and invaluable privilege declared, *Light is come into the world.* A personal light, CHRIST; a doctrinal light, the Gospel. Observe, 2. The unworthiness, abuse, and great indignity, which the world, through infidelity, offers to this benefit: they reject it, and *love darkness rather than light.* Observe, 3. The dreadful sentence of wrath which the rejection of this benefit, and the abuse of Christ, brings upon the impenitent and unbelieving world. It terminates in their full and final condemnation: *This is the condemnation*; that is, 'tis a just and righteous condemnation, 'tis an inevitable and unavoidable condemnation: 'tis an heightened and aggravated, 'tis an accelerated and hastened, an irrecoverable and eternal condemnation. Learn hence, That the greater and clearer the light is, under which the unregenerate and impenitent do live in this world, so much the heavier will their condemnation and misery be in the world to come, if they wilfully and finally reject it.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved: 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

In these words our Saviour acquaints us with the different nature of sin and holiness. It is the nature of sin, and the property of sinners, to hate the light, because it discovers the evil and sinfulness of their ways unto them, and condemns them for them; as the Ethiopians are said to curse the sun for its bright and hot shining: whereas holy and gracious persons, that walk uprightly, do love the light; that is, they delight to have their thoughts, words, and actions, tried by the light of the word, be-

cause *they are wrought in God*; that is, performed as in the sight of God, according to the direction of the word of God, and with a single eye and sincere aim at the glory of God. Learn hence, 1. That the word of God, or the gospel of Jesus Christ, has all the properties of a great and true light. It is of a pure and purifying nature, it is of a manifestive and discovering nature. It has a piercing power, and penetrating virtue; it enters the darkest recesses of the soul, and detects the errors of men's judgments, as well as discovers the enormities of their lives. Learn, 2. That nothing is so hateful to, and hated by, a wicked man, as the discovering and reproofing light of the word of God; for at the same time that it discovers the sin, it condemns the sinner. Learn, 3. That a truly gracious person, who acteth agreeable to the will of God, is not afraid to examine his actions by the word of God; but desires and delights that what he doth may be made manifest both to God and man. *He that doeth truth, cometh to the light, and rejoiceth, that his deeds may be made manifest, because they are wrought in God.*

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. 23 And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized: 24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

Our blessed Saviour having now finished his excellent sermon, preached to Nicodemus at Jerusalem, he departs thence with his disciples into the country of Judea, to make proselytes by the ordinance of baptism. Where note, 1. Our Lord's unwearied diligence in doing his Father's work and will. *He goes from place to place, from city to country, preaching with, and baptizing by, his disciples; for Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,* John iv. 2. Note, 2. That the enjoyment of Christ's bodily presence did not take away the use of his own ordinances. None are above ordinances, till they come to heaven. The ordinance of baptism is here administered by the disciples, even in the presence of Christ himself. This is called, The baptism of repentance, of which children, as well as others, were capable subjects; because baptism doth not require children's repentance at present,

but engages them to repentance for time to come; as children that were circumcised were obliged to observe the whole law, but could not perform it till they came to understand it. Note, 3. How John did go on with his work of baptizing, though Christ and his disciples did eclipse and obscure him; though the people now flocked after Christ, *All men came unto him*, ver. 26. yet John kept to his duty. 'Tis the duty of God's ministers to continue in their diligence, and go on with their work, when God raises up others about them of greater parts and better success. O! the admirable humility of that minister, who can say with John the Baptist, *Let another increase though I decrease.*

25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews, about purifying. 26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

Observe here, What a spirit of envy there was in John's disciples against Christ, upon account of the multitude of his followers: *He, that was with thee beyond Jordan, baptizeth, and all men come to him.* Where note, 1. How meanly John's disciples think and speak of our Saviour, compared with John their master. They do not so much as allow him a name, or give him any title, but, *He that was with thee beyond Jordan, the same baptizeth.* Observe, 2. How they intimate, as if Christ had received all his credit and reputation from their master, John: *He to whom thou barest witness, baptizeth*; as if they had said, "This man whom the people flock after, neglecting thee and thy disciples, is much inferior to thee; for he came to thee, thou didst not go to him; thou baptizedst him, he did not baptize thee: thou gavest testimony to him, he did not give testimony to thee." Whence we observe, What a bitter spirit of envy and emulation there has always been amongst the ministers of the gospel, even from the very first plantation of the gospel, which causes them to look upon the exalted parts and gifts of others as a diminution and debasing of their own: but why should the prospering of the work of God, in one minister's hand, be matter of reproof unto others? Shall not God honour

what instruments he pleaseth? And will he not reward all his faithful labourers, according to their sincerity, not according to their success?

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. 28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease. 31 He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

Observe here, How holily and wisely John the Baptist corrects the envy and jealousy of his own disciples, and endeavours to root out all prejudices out of their minds against Christ; in order to which, he shows them a five-fold difference betwixt Christ and himself. 1. He tells them Christ was the Master, John but his minister, and that he had told them so from the beginning: *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.* The faithful ministers of Christ think it honour enough to be servants to him, and would not have their followers attribute the least part of that honour and glory to them, which is due to Jesus Christ. 2. John acquaints his disciples, that Christ was the Bridegroom of his church, to whom the christian church was to be solemnly espoused and married; and that he had honour enough in being one of the Bridegroom's friends and servants; and accordingly, instead of envying, he rejoiced at the success which the Bridegroom had, and took great pleasure in it. Learn, 1. That the relation betwixt Christ and his church is a conjugal relation, a relation of marriage; yet set forth under the name of Bride and Bridegroom, rather than under the notion of a complete marriage, because it is but begun here, and to be consummated in heaven. And also to show, that Christ's and his people's affections are as warm and fresh, as strong and vehement, towards each other, as the affections of

espoused or newly married persons are to one another, Isa. lxii. 5. *As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.* Learn, 2. It is honour sufficient to the ministers of Christ, that they, as friends of the Bridegroom, are employed by him to further the marriage relation betwixt him and his spouse. Their office is to woo for Christ, to commend his person, and to invite all persons to accept of him for their head and husband, 2 Cor. xi. 2. *I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* Learn, That there is no greater joy to the ministers of Christ, than to see themselves honoured by him, as his instruments, in preparing a people for Christ, and happily uniting them unto him. O! how little do our people know, and less consider, how much of the comfort of their poor ministers' lives lies at their mercy: We live as we see any of them stand fast in the Lord; we die as we see others stick fast in their sins. This was the second difference which John acquaints his disciples was found betwixt Christ and himself. The third follows, ver. 30. *He must increase, but I must decrease.* He must increase; that is, in honour and dignity, in esteem and reputation, in discovery and manifestation. He shall shine forth as the rising sun, and I must disappear as the morning-star. Not that John's light was diminished, but by a greater light obscured only; as all the stars disappear at the appearance of the sun. Yet observe what matter of joy it was to John to see himself outshined by Christ: Let him increase, though I decrease. That minister has true light in himself, that can rejoice when he is outshined by others; who is content to be abased and obscured, if he may but see Christ dignified and exalted in the lives of his people, whosoever the person is whom God honours as his instrument in that service. The fourth difference wherein Christ excels John and all his ministers, is in the divine original of his person, ver. 13. *He that cometh from above, is above all,* says John. Now Christ is from above, his original is from heaven: I am from the earth, (though I had my commission from heaven,) and accordingly my words and actions are earthly. My Master therefore infinitely surpasses and excels me in the dignity of his person, and in the sublimity of his knowledge. From the whole, note, How much it is the desire and endeavour of every gospel noi-

minister to magnify Jesus Christ, to display his glorious excellences and perfections before the people, that they may reverence his person, revere his authority, and respect his laws. This was the care of the holy Baptist here, and it will be the endeavour of every faithful minister of Christ that succeeds John, to the end of the world.

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. 33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. 34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

Observe, 1. Another great difference which the Baptist teacheth his disciples to put betwixt his testimony and Christ's: To the intent that he might remove the prejudice which was upon his disciples' minds against the Messiah, he shows them, that his own testimony (which they so much admired) was by revelation only; Christ's by immediate intuition. John testified only what he had received; but Christ what he had seen; lying in the bosom of the Father. *What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth.* Learn hence, That it is Christ's (the great Prophet of his church) peculiar prerogative, to have the knowledge of divine truths immediately from the Father, by special communication; and that all others receive their knowledge from him by gracious illumination only. Observe, 2. How sadly and sorrowfully the holy Baptist resents it, that Christ's testimony was no better received and entertained by the world. *He testifieth, but no man receiveth his testimony.* John's disciples murmured, *That all men come unto Christ,* ver. 26. but John mourns that there came not more, and complains that none, that is, very few, received his testimony. Thence learn, That it ought and will be matter of great regret and sorrow to all the friends of Jesus Christ, but especially to his faithful ministers and servants, that his doctrine is so ill received and entertained in the world. It greatly affects and grievously afflicts them, that when they testify of Christ, no man, that is, comparatively very few men, receive their testimony. Observe, 3. The eulogy and high commendation given of all true believers. *They receive Christ's testimony,* and thereby set to their seal

*that God is true:* that is, have subscribed to, and ratified the truth of God; that God in all his promises of the Messiah, under the Old Testament, is faithful and true. Learn hence, The great honour that God puts upon the faith of believers. As unbelief defames God, and makes him a liar; so faith gives testimony to the truth of God, and setteth to its seal that God is true; *He that receiveth his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.* Observe, 4. The illustrious character which the holy Baptist gives of Christ his Master; he is the person whom God hath sent, and unto whom God giveth not his Spirit by measure. *He whom God hath sent;* that is, immediately and extraordinarily, from heaven; not as the prophets and apostles were sent, but in a way peculiar to himself; having authority for speaking, not only from God, but as being God himself. And accordingly it is added, *that God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;* that is, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit were poured forth upon Christ in a measure far above and beyond all finite creatures: there being a double difference betwixt Christ's fulness of the Spirit, and all other persons' whatsoever. 1. In the measure of it. God did not give out the Spirit to Christ sparingly, and with limitation, as he did to the former prophets and John the Baptist, in proportion to what their offices required; but he was anointed more plentifully and abundantly with the Holy Spirit above and beyond his fellows. 2. In the manner of its working. The holy prophets that were filled with the Spirit, (according to their measures,) yet could not do or declare all things, nor act upon all occasions; but sometimes the Spirit restrained them, and sometimes departed from them. But Christ had no limits put upon the vigour of his spirit, but his own will; therefore could work what and when he pleased. Learn from hence, That Christ had an abundant fitness from God for the discharge of his office, and an abundant fulness for his people. God did not measure to him a certain quantity and proportion of the gifts and graces of his Spirit, but poured it forth upon him without measure.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

The Father loved the Son from eternity as he was his Son by eternal generation; and he loved him as Mediator by special

constitution ; he loves him as the brightness of his own glory, and the express image of his person, with an essential, natural, and necessary love ; and he loves him as Mediator, for undertaking our cause, and interposing for our peace. Learn hence, That God the Father had a special love and affection to Christ, not only in regard of his eternal sonship, but with respect to his office and mediatorship : *The Father loveth the Son.* It follows, *He hath given all things into his hand ;* that is, he hath entrusted him with all things necessary to our salvation. Lord ! what a privilege is this, that our happiness is in Christ's hand, not in our own, without his. O wonderful goodness, to put our concerns into the sure hands of his Son, which were lost by the weak hands of Adam !

36 He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Learn, 1. That though all power be given to Christ, to dispense grace here and glory hereafter, yet none must expect to enjoy it, but upon condition of believing in him, and obeying him ; for the original word signifies both. No faith is acceptable to Christ, nor available to our salvation, but that which is the parent and principle of obedience. Learn, 2. That final unbelief renders a man infallibly an object of the eternal wrath of God ; *He that believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him.* The unbeliever now lies under the sentence of God's wrath, hereafter he shall lie under the full and final execution of it. Lord ! how sad is it to be here in a state of condemnation ! but how intolerable will it be in hell, to continue eternally under the power of condemnation ! to lie for ever in that mysterious fire of hell, whose strange property is always to torture, but never to kill ; or always to kill, but never to consume : for, after millions of years are expired, still 'tis a wrath to come ; and though the unbeliever has felt and endured never so much, yet still *the wrath of God abideth on him.* Every word carries dread and terror with it. The *wrath*, not the anger ; and the *wrath of God*, not of man, at whose rebukes the devils tremble. And this wrath of God not only flashes out like lightning, but *abides*, dwells, and sticks fast, upon

him : that is, on his person, the whole man, soul and body.

#### CHAP. IV.

**W**HEN therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John. 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) 3 He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with our Saviour's removal from Judea into Galilee. The occasion of it was this : Christ hearing that John was cast into prison, and understanding how the Pharisees were enraged at the increasing of the number of his disciples ; to decline their fury, and to prevent danger to himself, he leaves Judea, and departs into Galilee for his own preservation. Hence learn, That when the faithful ministers of Christ do meet with eminent success in their master's service, they must expect to meet with a mighty shock of malice and envy from Satan and his wicked instruments. Christ himself experienced it ; let his ministers expect it, and prepare for it. 2. That it is neither unlawful nor unbecoming for the ministers of Christ to flee when persecution threatens them ; their Lord and Master having fled before them ; and commanded also, *When they persecute you in one city, flee to another.*

4 And he must needs go through Samaria. 5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well ; and it was about the sixth hour.

Here observe, 1. How wonderfully the wisdom of God overrules the malice of men for his own glory, and the good of others. The malice of the Pharisees in Judea drives Christ into Galilee, and in his passage through Samaria, the first-fruits of the Gentiles are called, and particularly the woman of Samaria. Observe, 2. How in every step of Christ's way he was doing good to the souls of men. In his passage through Samaria into Galilee, a poor woman is brought to know him to

be the true Messias. Observe, 3. Our holy Lord, in his journeying from place to place, did travel usually on foot; and the weakness of his body, upon travelling, shows him to be truly and really man, *and in all things like unto us, sin only excepted*. Our blessed Lord did not only take upon him our nature, but the infirmities of our nature also.

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. 8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) 9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? (for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.)

Observe here, 1. How all our motions and actions are under the direction and government of God, and how divine Providence doth sometimes dispose of small matters to become occasions of great good. This poor woman's coming to the well to draw water, became the means of her conversion. Observe, 2. Christ speaks to, and seeks after, this poor woman, before she takes any notice of him; God is found of those that seek him not, and makes himself manifest to them that enquire not after him: *Jesus said unto her, Give me to drink*. Observe, 3. The great poverty of our Lord's outward condition; he wanted a draught of water for his refreshment, and a meal's meat now at dinner-time, to refresh his wearied nature. O! what contempt did Christ cast upon the world when he was here in it; He would not honour it so far as to keep any part of it in his own hand. Yet observe, 4. That though Christ had neither house nor land, nor money of his own, yet he lived not by begging, or upon mere alms. *The disciples were now gone into the city to buy (not to beg) meat*; for there was a bag required a bearer, *John xii. 6*. And our Saviour's friends and followers supplied him with money for his necessary occasions: *His disciples were gone to buy bread*. Observe, lastly, How bitter is the enmity which differences in religion, and diversities of opinions, do occasion: they do not only alienate affections, but even violate the bonds of civil society and common conversation. *The Jews had no dealings with the Samari-*

*tans*; would neither eat nor drink with them.

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

The Samaritan woman had refused Christ a draught of water in the former verse: he offers her the water of life in this verse. O! how kindly doth Christ deal with those that deal unkindly with him! *If thou knewest the gift of God, &c.* Here observe, 1. The mercy which Christ had for, and was so desirous to bestow upon, this poor woman: it was the gift of God; that is, himself, his holy Spirit, in the sanctifying gifts and saving graces of it. All which are compared to water, in regard of their effects and operations, which are to purify the unclean, and to satisfy the thirsty. Observe, 2. The way and course which this woman, and every lost sinner, ought to take, in order to the obtaining of this inestimable gift; and that is, by asking it: *Thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee living water*. Learn hence, That Christ himself, his holy Spirit, with all the sanctifying graces of it, must be earnestly sought of God: and such as do unfeignedly seek them, shall certainly obtain them. Observe, 3. The true cause and reason assigned, why sinners ask not for, and seek not after, Jesus Christ, and the graces of the Holy Spirit; and that is, ignorance of the worth and want of them. *If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked*. Learn hence, That it is ignorance of the worth of Christ, and insensibleness of the want of him, that makes persons so indifferent in their desires after him, and so remiss in their endeavours for the obtaining of him. O, sinners! did you but know who and what Christ is, that is offered to you, did you but see his beauty, fulness, and suitableness, and were you but sensible of the worth and want of him, all the world could not keep you from him; you would break through all difficulties and dangers, through all sufferings and reproaches, to come unto the enjoyment of him.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?



12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? 13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Observe here, 1. How ignorant persons are of spiritual things, till enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God. This poor woman's question, *Whence hast thou the living water?* looks much like that of Nicodemus, John iii. 9. *How can these things be?* A natural person cannot perceive the mind of Christ when speaking to him about spiritual things. Spiritual objects must have a spiritual eye to discern and behold them, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit.* Observe, 2. With what great humility and condescension our holy Lord treats this poor woman, pitying her ignorance, and pardoning her infidelity; he tells her, That the water of that well which she was about to draw, could not give an abiding satisfaction; but the thirst, quenched for the present, would certainly return again: but he that should drink of the water which he had to give, that is, be made partaker of the graces of his Spirit, shall find such refreshing satisfaction therefrom, that all inordinate desires after earthly things will be quenched and extinguished, and will be like a well of water springing up, till he come to eternal glory. Learn hence, 1. That as the body of man is subject to a natural, so is the soul of man subject to a spiritual, kind of thirst. 2. That no creature-comfort, or earthly enjoyment, can quench this thirst which the soul of a man is subject unto. 3. That the spirit of grace (which our Saviour here calls the *water of life*) is able fully and perfectly to quench the thirst of the soul: and where it is once savingly received, shall never be totally nor finally lost. *It shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life;* that is, the graces of the Spirit shall be in believers as permanent habits, as fixed principles, that shall not decay. Hence St. Peter calls it *incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. 17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

These words set forth unto us, 1. What manner of person this woman was, whose conversion Christ sought so industriously after. 2. The means he used in order to that end. Observe, 1. What manner of person this woman was; beside that she was an idolater, as being a Samaritan, she was also an adulteress, and lived now in the sin of uncleanness with one that was not her husband, after she had had five husbands before. Whence we learn, that the ice of old age will not quench the fire of lust, *Concupiscentia non senescit*; such is the pollution of our nature, that lust will be insatiable, if grace doth not restrain it. This woman, after five marriages, yet lives in the sin of uncleanness. Observe, 2. The way and manner our Lord takes, the method and means our Lord uses, in order to her conversion. 1. He deals very tenderly and gently with her; he uses no roughness or tartness of speech with her; he doth not call her whore, nor upbraid her for her impudent lewdness, in living with a man that was none of her husband, but only gives her to understand that he knew the sin she lived in; yet this he did likewise with all imaginable privacy, whilst his disciples were away, and nobody by but they two only. Hence learn, 1. That private sins are not to be reprov'd publicly. 2. That in reprov'g sin, all sharpness and bitterness of expression must be avoided; the pill of reproof must be wrapped up in sugar; for if they to whom it is given taste the bitterness of gall and passion mixed with it, they will certainly spit it out before, it may be, upon, our faces. Our Lord's practice here instructs us, that sin is to be so reprov'd, as that the credit and estimation of the sinner may be preserved as much as may be. Note, 2. That as Christ dealt with this woman tenderly and gently, so he discovers her sins to her particularly, and sets her secret sin before the face of her conscience

distinctly. If ever the ministry of the word works upon the minds of men to their conversion, it must be by a particular and close application of the word to every man's conscience: generals will not affect. Note, 3. What the particular sin is, which Christ charges home upon the conscience of this woman; it is the sin of uncleanness, that the man she kept with was not her husband. Learn hence, That, amongst all sin, the sin of uncleanness will lie heaviest upon the conscience, and wound the soul most deeply, when the Spirit of God once effectually discovers it, and charges it home upon the conscience. For there is no sin so directly opposite to sanctification and holiness as this sin; no sin that quenches the Holy Spirit of God like this.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

In these verses the evangelist declares a threefold effect and fruit of the grace of conversion that appeared in this woman. 1. She neither denied, nor excused, nor extenuated this sin, which Christ had charged her with, but tacitly owns, and implicitly confesses it. 2. She doth not only own, and confess what she was charged with, but she doth profess reverence to our Saviour's person, and pays honour to him as an extraordinary prophet: *Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.* 3. She desired instruction and solution from him concerning the worship and service of the true God, how she might seek him, and where she might serve him most acceptably; whether at Jerusalem, or upon mount Gerizim? *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain: but ye say, Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* Where observe, How ready and forward persons of a false religion are to ascribe too much to antiquity, and to the example and custom of their forefathers. Whereas it is not the continuance of a thousand or two thousand years that can make any thing truly ancient in religion, except it has been from the beginning: nothing is truly ancient in matters of religion, but that which can derive its original from Him that is truly called the *Ancient of Days.*

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain,

nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 29 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Here we have our Saviour's answer to the foregoing question, which consists of two parts. 1. Concerning the place of worship. 2. Concerning the worship itself. As to the place of worship, our Saviour tells her, That though the Jews had heretofore by warrant of God's word regularly worshipped at Jerusalem, and the Samaritans superstitiously worshipped at mount Gerizim, yet the hour was coming, namely, at his death, when all difference of places for God's worship should be taken away, and therefore she need not trouble herself about the place of God's worship to know whether of the two places were holier, and the better to serve God in; for ere long the service of God should not be confined more to one place than another. Learn hence, 1. That, since the death of Christ, the religious difference of places is taken away, and the worship of God not confined to any one particular place or nation. 2. Our blessed Saviour resolves her, concerning the worship itself, namely, That the ceremonial worship, which the Jews and Samaritans used, should shortly be abolished, and instead thereof a more spiritual form of worship should be established, more suitable to the spiritual nature of the great and holy God, and containing in it the truth and substance of all that which the Jewish ceremonies prefigured and shadowed forth. Learn hence, That the true worship of God under the gospel doth not consist in the external pomp of any outward ceremonies, but is spiritual and substantial; no worship is acceptable to him, who is the Father of spirits, but that which is truly spiritual.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

*God is a Spirit;* that is, he hath no body, nor bodily parts: he is not a bare spiritual substance; but a pure and perfect Spirit: and therefore his worshippers *must worship him in spirit and in truth:* where

spirit is opposed to the legal ceremonies, and truth to the Jewish rites, not to hypocritical services; for the old patriarchs did worship God in *spirit* and in *truth*. As truth is taken for sincerity, they served him with a sincere conscience, and with a single heart. But our Saviour's business is to show, That a worship, without legal rites and Jewish ceremonies, is proper to the times of the gospel. In the words, Observe, 1. The nature of God declared: *God is a Spirit*. 2. The duty of men inferred: *therefore they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth*. From the whole note, 1. That God is a pure spiritual Being. When bodily parts, hands, and eyes, &c. are ascribed to him, it is only in condescension to our weakness, and to signify those acts in God, which such members do perform in us. Note, 2. That the worship due from the creature to God is spiritual worship, and ought to be spiritually performed; that is, we must worship him from spiritual principles, sincere love, and filial reverence; for spiritual ends, that we may please him, and promote his glory; and after a spiritual manner, with the whole heart, soul, and mind, and with a fervency of spirit. We must have awful apprehensions of him, suitable to the nature of his being: but above all, we must endeavour to resemble him. Then is God best worshipped by us, when we are most like to him. The Jewish ceremonial worship was abolished, to promote the spirituality of divine worship; yet must not this be so understood, as if God rejected bodily worship, because he requires spiritual under the gospel; for Jesus Christ the most spiritual worshipper, worshipped God with his body. Besides, God has appointed some parts of worship, which cannot be performed without the body, as Sacraments. In a word, God has created the body as well as the soul; Christ has redeemed the body as well as the soul, and he will glorify the body as well as the soul: therefore it is our duty to worship and glorify God with our bodies, and with our spirits, which are his.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.

Observe here, 1. What a general expectation there was in the minds of all persons

(at the time of our Saviour's appearing) of one whom the Jews call the Messiah. *I know that Messiah cometh*. This woman, though a Samaritan, yet knew that the Messiah should come, and that he was now expected. Observe, 2. What the work and office of the Messiah was apprehended and believed to be, namely, to reveal the whole mind and will of God to a lost world: *When the Messiah is come, he will tell us all things*. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised and true Messiah, being called and appointed by God to be the great Prophet of his church, hath fully and perfectly revealed all things needful to be known for our salvation, John xv. 15. *All things that I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you*. Observe lastly, How freely and fully Christ reveals himself to this poor woman; he tells her plainly, that he was the Messiah. When the Jews asked him, John x. 24. *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly*: Christ did not in plain terms tell them who he was; nay, when John Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask him, whether he were *He that should come*? he gave them no direct answer: yet, behold, he makes himself plainly known to this poor woman; he discerns her humility and great simplicity, that she was willing to be instructed by him, and did not come to him as the Jews and Pharisees did, captiously, with a design to entangle and ensnare him. Hence learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ delights to reveal himself, and make known his mind and will, to such as with an humble mind, and an honest simplicity of heart, do desire to know him, and understand their duty to him.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? 28 The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, 29 Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ? 30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

Observe here, 1. How the providence of God so ordered and disposed of things, that the disciples did not return to Christ, till he had finished his discourse with this

poor woman. An humble sinner may meet with such satisfaction and sweet refreshment in Christ's company, that the presence even of disciples themselves (the best and holiest of saints) may be looked upon as injurious to it, and an interruption of it. This poor woman had so sweet a time with Christ, that an end being put to the conference by the coming of the disciples, might be matter of grief and resentment to her: yet the providence of God so ordered, that the disciples did not come to break off the conference till Christ had made himself known as the *Messias* to this poor woman. Observe, 2. The carriage and behaviour of the disciples upon their return to Christ: finding him preaching a sermon to a single woman, they marvelled, but yet were silent. Learn, 1. That the humility and condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ, in treating poor penitent and humble sinners, is a matter of wonder and admiration, even to disciples themselves. O, blessed Saviour! there was more kindness and condescension, more love and compassion, more meekness and humility, in thyself alone, than in all thy disciples and followers put together. Yet observe, 2. Though they marvelled, they were silent, *No man said, Why talkest thou with her?* Thence note, That such reverence is due to Christ in all his dispensations and actions, that when we can see no reason for what he doth, it is not for us to enquire, much less for us to quarrel; but we must awfully admire what we cannot comprehend. Observe, 3. The behaviour of this woman after the conference was over; she leaves her water-pot, and makes haste to invite and call her neighbours to Christ, whose grace and kindness she had experienced. Learn hence, That such as truly know Christ, have tasted sweetness in him, and derived comfort and satisfaction from him, will be forward to invite and industrious to draw others to a saving acquaintance with him. *Come with me, and see a man that told me all that ever I did: is not this the Christ?* Learn farther, from the woman's leaving her water-pot behind her, and hastening to the city, That when once a soul has tasted the sweetness and excellency that is in Jesus Christ, those things which were highly esteemed before will be little regarded then. The poor woman came to draw water, and thought much and spake much of the water of that well which was before her; but meeting with Jesus Christ, and tasting of his grace, she

forgets both water and water-pot, and away she goes to fetch in all her acquaintance to Christ.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. 32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat which ye know not of. 33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat? 34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Observe here, The fit and seasonable motion which our Saviour's disciples make to him; *Master, eat.* Learn from thence, That though a person's chief care should be for his own soul, and for improving all opportunities for doing good to the souls of others; yet the bodies of men must not be neglected, but supported by meat and drink; especially theirs, whose health and strength may be of greater use and service to God and his church. The body is the servant of the soul, the instrument whereby it worketh: and therefore to neglect the body is to disable and unfit the soul for service, to hinder the functions and operations of it. The sixth commandment, which forbids us to kill, requires us to use all means for the preservation of life, both in ourselves and others. Observe next, Our Saviour's answer to the disciples' motion; *Master, eat, say they. I have meat to eat that ye know not of,* says he, *for my meat is to do the will of him that sent me.* Not that our Saviour did not want meat at this time, for he was both hungry and thirsty, as appears by his asking water of the woman to drink, and by his sending his disciples into the city to buy meat: but our Lord was more intent upon doing his Father's work, than upon satisfying his own hunger. Christ hungered more after an opportunity of doing good to the souls of men, than he did after meat and drink to satisfy his hunger. Lord! let us, thy ministers, learn of thee to prefer the spiritual welfare of our people, before any temporal advantages whatsoever.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. 36 And he that reapeth receiveth

wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. 37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. 38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

Our blessed Saviour having in the former verses given a most plain and evident demonstration of his fervent desire to bring souls home to God, doth in these verses labour to stir up and kindle the like affections in his disciples: and this he doth by three very effectual arguments. The first argument is drawn from the ripeness of the people, and their willingness to hear, and their readiness to be reaped and gathered by the gospel (whereof there was a present instance in the Samaritans, who were now coming forth in multitudes to Christ,) which opportunity was therefore to be improved, *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already for harvest.* Learn hence, That as a people is sometimes ripe for the ministry of the word, as corn is ripe and ready for the reaper's hand, so it is the duty of the ministers of Christ to lay hold upon such opportunities with as much desire and delight, as the harvest-men do upon a reaping season. The second argument to stir up the disciples' diligence in preaching the gospel, is drawn from the great reward they should receive for this their work: *He that reapeth receiveth wages.* The harvest-man's wages is double to what other labourers receive. The ministers of God shall receive good wages at his hand, how ill soever they are requited and rewarded by an unkind world. And, as a farther encouragement, it follows, *He that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together:* that is, The prophets who took so much pains in sowing the seed of the gospel, and particularly John the Baptist, and you my apostles, which succeed them, and reap the fruit of what they did sow, shall have the same reward in glory, and rejoice together. Learn hence, That not only the successful, but the faithful labourer in God's harvest, shall be rewarded: not only those which see the fruit of their ministry in the conversion of sinners, but such as are faithful seedsmen. Though the seed does not come up till we are in our graves, nay, though it rots under the clods,

and does not come up at all, yet shall the faithful seedsmen be rewarded according to his labour, not according to his success. The third argument to quicken the disciples' diligence, is drawn from the easiness and facility of that labour which God required of them: *Others have laboured, and we are entered into their labours;* that is, The prophets and John the Baptist have prepared the ground, and sown the seed, and made ready a people for the Lord, and now you enter into their labours, performing and gathering them into the gospel-church; yet this must not be understood absolutely, but comparatively: not as if the prophets reaped nothing, converted none; but that their fruit was small in comparison of the success which the apostles found. Nor is it to be understood as if the apostles took no pains at all, but that the prophets' greater pains render the apostles' labour successful, who took less pains. Learn hence, That the wisdom of God sees it fit that all his servants in the work of the ministry do not meet with the same difficulties, nor enjoy the same success. Some are laborious sowers, others are joyful reapers; some labour all their days with little visible success, others bring in many to Christ, perhaps by a single sermon; some labour even with weariness, and reap little, others enter into their labours, and reap much.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, *He told me all that ever I did.* 40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his own word; 42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Here an account is given of the conversion of more of the Samaritans from the city of Sichar. Some believed on him, upon the full report which the woman had made, *That he had told her all that ever she did;* but others were brought to believe by *his own word.* Now from the woman's being an instrument to bring her acquaintance to

Christ by her own experience of what she had heard from him; Learn, 1. That very weak instruments, when they employ themselves for Christ, desiring to extol his praise, and set forth his glory, are sometimes richly blessed with great success. *Many of the Samaritans believed for the saying of this poor woman.* Learn, 2. That when a person can say but little of Christ, yet if it be spoken from experience and a sensible feeling, it will be more successful and persuasive, than much more that is spoken from notional knowledge. Such was this woman's testimony concerning Christ, *Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?* She spoke what she found, yea, what she felt within herself, and speaking her own experience, *many believed on him for her saying.* But farther, These Samaritans believed Christ to be a prophet upon the testimony of this woman; but they believed him afterwards to be the Messiah, or the Saviour of the world, upon the credit and authority of his own word, ver. 41. *And many more believed because of his own word.* Thence learn, That although instruments speaking may be a mean to draw persons to give some assent to truth, yet it is Christ himself that must work a full persuasion, and his own word is the surest foundation for faith to build and depend upon: *Now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves.*

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. 44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. 45 Then, when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

Our blessed Saviour having spent two days with the Samaritans, as an introduction to the calling of the Gentiles, he goes forward towards Galilee, the place which he was pleased to make choice of for the exercise of the greatest part of his ministry. Coming into Galilee, he passed by the city of Nazareth, where he had had his education, knowing what little respect he was like to find there; a prophet ordinarily having little honour in his own country: therefore shunning Nazareth, he goeth to

Cana, where he had done his first miracle. Learn hence, 1. That there is a real tribute of honour due unto every prophet and minister of God, which ought to be testified by reverence to their persons, by a due estimation of the dignity of their calling, by obedience to their doctrine, and by an honourable maintenance. A prophet should have honour; and honour includes all these. Learn, 2. It is very usual and ordinary for the prophets of God to meet with least respect where they are most known; their nearest neighbours, their nearest relations, their nearest acquaintance, are oft-times farthest off from giving them that honour that is due unto them. Learn, 3. That the true prophets and messengers of God shall be sure to find some that will entertain their persons, and embrace their ministry, though they be disesteemed and rejected by others. Though our Saviour had no honour at Nazareth, yet he found entertainment amongst the rest of the Galileans.

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. 48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. 49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. 50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. 51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. 52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. 53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. 54 This is again the second miracle

that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

In this last paragraph of the chapter, we find our blessed Saviour performing a second miracle in Cana of Galilee, curing a nobleman's son that was sick of a fever: This nobleman apprehended Christ to be a prophet, and believed that if he were a prophet, and believed that if he were bodily present with his son, he might possibly cure him; but he did not believe him to be the Messiah, who was true God, and every where present: therefore to give him an infallible proof that he was so, he tells him his son was cured by the word of his mouth, even at that distance. By which miracle he cured not only the child of his fever, but the father of his unbelief. From the whole we note, 1. The person that here applies himself to Christ: a *nobleman*. We do not find Christ oft attended with nobility. *Have any of the rulers believed on him?* Yes; here is one: the sovereign grace of God is free: and he has his numbers among all orders, ranks, and degrees of men. And though not many noble are called, yet some are. Note, 2. The calamity which befell this noble person, *his son was sick*; yea, dying. Earthly greatness is no defence against afflictions; great men are in trouble as other men; neither the wealth and riches of this nobleman, nor his power and authority, nor his honour in his country, nor his favour with his prince, could keep off God's hand either from himself or from his son; but the father feels as much by sympathy, as the child by sense. Note, 3. The cause and special occasion which brought this nobleman to Christ: it was, in general, an affliction; and, in particular, the sickness of his child. Learn hence, That great is the fruit and profit of afflictions to the children of men. Many, with this nobleman, never come to Christ till they be driven by the cross; and, particularly, God sanctifies the sickness and death of near and dear relations, children in special, to bring persons nearer to himself. Note, 4. This nobleman was neither faithless nor faithful; had he been quite faithless, he had not taken such pains to come to Christ; had he been faithful, he had not limited the Son of God, by saying, *Come down and heal my son, ere he die*. *Come down*, as if Christ could not have cured him absent, *ere my son die*, as if the same power required to him being sick, could

not raise him being dead. Lord, *heal my son*, had been a proper suit to him who was the great Physician: but, *Come down, and heal him*: was to teach Christ how to work. He who doth whatsoever he will, must do it how he will, and when he will. It is for us to crave and receive, not to prescribe and appoint. Note, 5. The meekness and great condescending goodness of Jesus Christ; notwithstanding the infirmity of this poor man, our Lord says, *Go thy way, thy son liveth*. Worthiness in the creature, is not the motive that rules Christ. Should we measure our hopes by our worthiness, there was no blessing to be hoped for; but if we measure them by Christ's bounty and compassion, there is no blessing to be despaired of. Note, 6. How Christ not only answers the desires, but exceeds the expectations, of this distressed person: his request was only, *Come and heal my son*. Christ's answer was, *Go thy way, thy son liveth*. Our heavenly Father, when he doth not give us what we ask, gives us better than we asked. We ask what we think best, but God gives what he knows to be best. Christ here gave a greater demonstration of his omnipotence than was craved. Note lastly, With one word doth Christ heal two patients; the son of his fever, the father of his unbelief. It was a low degree of faith that brought the father to Christ; it was an higher degree that sent him back to his son; but highest of all, when finding his son healed, he himself believed and his whole house. Learn hence, That a weak faith may be true, but a true faith is always growing and increasing: *It is like the path of the just, that shineth more and more until the perfect day*.

#### CHAP. V.

**A**FTER this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first, after the troubling of the wa-

ter, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

This chapter begins with a description of the famous pool of Bethesda, whose waters were medicinal, to cure the first comer thereunto, whatsoever disease he had. Some think this was effected in a natural way, and that the entrails of the sacrificed beasts being washed in this pool, an healing virtue was communicated for curing the palsy, and such cold diseases; as persons that have lame and withered hands, are at this day directed to put them into the belly of a beast newly opened. But others look upon the healing virtue of this pool to be supernatural and miraculous, because it cured all diseases, how great and desperate soever, and this in a moment, or very quickly; and but one at a time, and that one the first that stepped in only, after an angel had descended and troubled the waters. All which show that the healing virtue came not from the goodness of the waters, but that it was a supernatural work. Some think that the miracle of this pool was granted to the Jews, partly to strengthen them in the true worship of God, and to confirm them in their religious course of sacrificing, against the scoffs of the Romans, who were now their lords; such a virtue being given to that water wherein their sacrifices were wont to be washed. Learn thence, That means of God's appointment, how improbable and unlikely soever, must not be despised, but awfully admired, and thankfully used; although the way and manner of their working be not understood or comprehended by us.

5 And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? 7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. 8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. 9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. 10 The Jews therefore said unto him

that was cured, It is the sabbath-day; it is not lawful for thee to carry *thy* bed. 11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. 12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? 13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in *that* place.

It was very commendable that the rich men did not engross this pool, and the benefit of it, to themselves, but suffered poor people to come to it. In this college of cripples, a poor man, who had been lame thirty-eight years, was found, who wanted strength to himself, wanting money to hire others, and others wanting mercy to help him; Christ takes pity on him, and because he could not go to health, health is graciously brought to him, and that by the hand of the great Physician, Christ Jesus. Observe here, 1. That not only are men's bodies subject to innumerable infirmities and diseases, but it pleases God for wise ends to continue some of his servants labouring under bodily weakness for many years together, yea, even all the days of their life. Here is a poor man for eight and thirty years together under the discipline of God's rod by bodily weakness. Observe, 2. That it is the duty of the afflicted to wait upon God in a diligent use of all means which God has appointed for their help and healing: as to trust to means, is to neglect God; so to neglect the means is to tempt God. This poor man, no doubt, had made use of the means before, yet waits at the pool now. Observe, 3. Though Christ well knew the case of this afflicted person, and wanted no information, yet he asks him, if he were willing to be made whole? To make him sensible of his misery, to quicken his desires after healing, and to raise his expectation of help from him. Though Christ knows our wants, yet he takes no notice of them, till we make them known to him by prayer. Observe, 4. The time when Christ wrought this miracle of healing upon the impotent man, it was on the sabbath-day; and as an evidence of the certainty of the cure, Christ bids him, *take up his bed, and walk*. Our Saviour's miracles were real and beneficial, they were obvious to



sense, and would bear the examination of all persons. The miracles which the church of Rome boast of will not bear the examination of our senses; their great miracle, Transubstantiation, is so far from being obvious to sense, that it contradicts the sense and reason of mankind, and is the greatest affront to human nature that ever the world was acquainted with. And our Saviour's working this and many other miracles on the sabbath-day, was for the testification of the miracles to all persons that would take notice of them. Observe, 5. How unjustly the Jews tax the cripple that was healed with the breach of the sabbath, for taking up his bed and walking on the sabbath-day; whereas the law only forbade carrying burdens on the sabbath-day for profit, in way of trade: but this man's carrying his bed, was a testimony of God's goodness and mercy towards him, and of his gratitude and thankfulness towards God. Hypocritical and superstitious persons oftentimes pretend much zeal for observing the letter of the law; little respecting the moral sense and signification of it. Besides, our Saviour has a mind to let the Jews know that he was Lord of the sabbath, that he had power over it, and could dispense with it as he thought good. Observe lastly, The great modesty and humility of our blessed Saviour; how hateful all ostentation and vain-glory was unto him; for having wrought this famous miracle before the people at a public time, the feast of the passover, to shun all applause from the multitude he conveys himself privately away from them: *Jesus conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.* Our Saviour's business was to do much good, and make but little noise: he sought not his own glory.

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

These words are our Saviour's seasonable advice and counsel to the poor impotent cripple, whom he had miraculously restored to health and soundness. Whence observe, 1. The person admonishing, *Jesus*; he that had been his physician before, is his monitor and teacher now: *Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more.* O how much it is the duty, but how seldom the practice, of those whom God makes

instruments for recovering bodily health, to put their patients in mind of their obligations to thankfulness and new obedience! Thus did our Saviour here. The recovered man's physician gave him instruction; his healer became his monitor: *Sin no more.* Observe, 2. The person admonished, the recovered cripple: *Thou art made whole.* But what was he? not a disciple, not a believer: *for he that was healed wist not who Jesus was,* ver. 13. he knew not Christ, therefore believed not on him, and yet was healed by him. Thence learn, That there are many outward mercies and common blessings, which Christ bestows upon those that have no spiritual knowledge of him, or saving acquaintance with him. *The man that was healed, wist not who he was that healed him.* Observe, 3. The place where Christ meets this his recovered patient; not at the tavern, but in the temple, returning thanks to God for his recovered health: when God sends forth his word and healeth us, it is our duty to make our first visit to God's house, and to pay our vows in the great congregation, and sound forth the praises of our great and gracious Deliverer. Observe, 4. The circumstance of time when Christ found him in the temple; soon after his recovery. *Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple.* We must not be clamorous and importunate to receive mercies, and dumb and tongue-tied in returning thanks; but make haste, and not delay the time to pay our acknowledgments to him that healeth us. Observe, 5. The admonition itself: *Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee;* where our Saviour admonishes him of the greatness of the mercy, *Behold, thou art made whole;* and subjoins a cautionary direction, *Sin no more.* Where it is necessarily implied, that sin is always the deserving, and oft-times the procuring, cause of a person's affliction and calamities; and that the best and surest way to prevent the return of judgment and calamities to a person, is for a person to return no more to sin; *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee:* where it is farther implied, that Almighty God has sorer plagues and severer judgments in store for those sinners who go on obstinately in a course of sin and rebellion against God, notwithstanding all the signal rebukes of his avenging anger. From the whole, note, That when the Lord doth graciously heal a person or a people, it is

a mercy to be much observed, and thankfully acknowledged.

15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole. 16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.

After the man understood who his healer and benefactor was, he went and told the Jewish magistrates it was Christ that had healed him. This he did, not with any evil design, no doubt, to inform against him, and stir up the Jews to persecute him; but desirous to publish what Christ had done, to his honour, and to direct others to make use of him. Learn thence, That it is the duty of all those who have experienced the power and pity of Christ themselves, to proclaim and publish it to others, to the intent that all that need him may experience help and healing from him. This seems to be the poor man's design: but behold the blindness, obstinacy, and malice of the Jews, who persecuted Christ, and sought to kill him for doing good, and healing a cripple that had been thirty-eight years so: *Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him.* Yet observe the cloak and pretence they have for their malicious persecution of our Saviour; namely, the supposed violation of the sabbath-day: *They sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.* Learn hence, That great cruelty against Christ and his members has always been, and still is, masked and disguised with a fair pretence of zeal for God and his commands. The Pharisees mortally hated our Saviour; therefore they cover their malice, and traduce him as a profaner of the sabbath, and seek to take away his life.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

From this verse to the end of the chapter, we have our Saviour's apology for his working the foregoing cure on the impotent man on the sabbath-day. And the chief argument he insists upon, is drawn from his unity and equality in nature and operation with his Father: *As the Father worketh, says he, so I work.* Here he speaks of himself not as a servant, or instrument in the Father's hand, but as the fellow-worker with the Father, both in the works of creation,

and in the works of providence and preservation also. Learn hence, 1. That though Almighty God has long since ceased from the work of creation, yet not from the work of preservation. *My Father worketh hitherto*; not by creating new kinds of creatures, but by upholding and preserving what he has already created. Learn, 2. That Christ the Son of God, is joined with and undivided from the Father in working. As the Father created all things by him, (not as a man, and as an instrument in his Father's hand; for then he was not such,) but as his fellow-worker, being equal in nature and power with the Father; in like manner as the Father preserveth, sustaineth, governeth, and upholdeth all things, so doth Christ; the Father's actions and his being the same. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. 19 Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

Observe here, The Jews, instead of being satisfied, were the more enraged; not only because he had violated the sabbath (as they pretended) by healing the cripple on the sabbath-day, but because Christ had asserted, that God was his Father in a peculiar manner, and made himself equal with God. Our Saviour therefore goes on to assert his equality and conjunction with the Father in his operations and workings; which does at once justify his work on the sabbath-day, and prove him to be truly and really God. Now our holy Lord, to prove himself equal with God the Father, produces first many arguments, to ver. 31. and then alleges the testimony of many witnesses to the end of the chapter. Our Saviour's first argument to prove himself equal with the Father in essence and nature, is this, that the Father and he are equal in operation, in will and consent for working; that the Son doeth all that the Father doeth, and the Father doeth nothing without the Son, ver. 19. *The Son can do nothing of himself*; that is, as Man, as the Messiah, and

as Mediator, he could do nothing of himself. His perfect obedience to, and compliance with the will of, his Father that sent him, would not suffer him to do any thing without him; but as God he could do all things of himself. Learn hence, That it is an undeniable proof that the Father and Son are one in nature, essence, and being; in that they are inseparable and undivided in operation and working: *What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise; and the Son doeth nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do:* therefore Father and Son being equal in operation and working, are equal in nature and being; and, consequently, both essentially, truly, and really God. Therefore the Arians of old, and the Socinians at this day, are wide when they produce this text, *The Son can do nothing of himself*, to prove that Christ is not equal with God the Father. They forget or neglect to distinguish between his divine nature, which could do all things, and his mediatorial office, which could not do but what the Father that sent him had appointed him to do.

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

The second argument which our Saviour produces to prove his unity in nature, and equality in operation, with the Father, is drawn from that special love which the Father beareth to the Son; which inclines him to communicate all things to him by a divine and ineffable communication. Learn hence, 1. That God the Father loveth Jesus Christ his Son, with an essential, natural, and necessary love, as being the substantial Image of himself, and the splendour and brightness of his glory. *The Father loveth the Son;* that is, with an essential, eternal, and ineffable love. 2. That the Father's love to Christ was communicative; the Father communicated his essence and nature, his wisdom and power, for operation to the Son: *The Father sheweth the Son all things that himself doeth;* namely, by a divine, inconceivable, and unspeakable communication.

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

A third argument proving Christ to be God, and equal with the Father, is here produced; namely, his raising of the dead: he is joined with the Father in that work, and equal with him: *As the Father quickeneth whom he pleaseth, so doth the Son quicken whom he will;* that is, not as the Father's instrument, but as a principal Agent, by the same authority, with the like absolute freedom of will which the Father uses, being a sovereign and independent being as the Father is: *As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth whom he will.* This is more than ever was said of any prophet or apostle, that he did such works at his will. Learn hence, 1. That quickening or raising of the dead, is an act of omnipotence, and proper to God only: *The Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth him.* 2. That Christ's power to raise the dead as well as the Father's, is a proof of his equality with his Father, and an evidence of his being truly and really God: *The Son quickeneth whom he will.*

22 For the Father judgeth no man: but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honour-eth not the Father which hath sent him.

A fourth instance of Christ's godhead, and proof of his equality with the Father, is, that it is his work to judge the world: *The Father, says Christ, judgeth no man:* that is, no man without me, but all men by me, to this intent *that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;* i. e. honour him with the same faith, love, fear, worship, that is due and payable to God the Father. Hence learn, 1. That Christ, as God, hath the absolute power of life and death, of absolution and condemnation, which he executes in conjunction with his Father. 2. That having this power of judging the world with the Father, doth show that the same glory is due to him, which is due unto the Father. *All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.* 3. That such as pretend to honour Christ, but deny him to be God, equal with the Father, withdraw the highest honour from him; and such as withdraw the honour from the Son, deny it to the Father, who will not be ho-

noured but in and through honouring of the Son. This text speaks dread and terror to the Socinians, who pretend to honour Christ, but not with the same honour with which they pretend to honour the Father. In God's account they honour him not at all: *For he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father.* True, they pray to Christ, and give him divine worship, though they believe him to be a creature; but what is this but idolatry, to worship that which by nature is not God, and to do that to a creature which God requires to be given to himself, having said, *My glory will I not give to another?* Isa. xlviii. 2. Divine honour can be only due to a divine person; that is, to him that is God blessed for ever.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25 Verily verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. 26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself: 27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Here we have a fifth evidence of Christ's godhead, and equality with the Father, namely, that he is the Author of spiritual and eternal life to all that believe on him. He that hath a fountain of life equal with the Father, and communicated to him from the Father, is God: but Christ hath this, ver 26. *For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.* Again, he that hath authority to execute judgment upon angels and men, is God; and Christ hath such authority, ver. 27. *He hath given him authority to execute judgment.* Farther, he that with his voice quickeneth and maketh them alive that hear it, is God; and Christ doth this ver. 25. *The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.* The dead; that is, 1. The spiritually dead; such as are dead in trespasses and sins: these, hearing the voice of Christ in the ministry of the word, shall live a life of

grace on earth, and a life of glory in heaven. 2. Such as are corporally dead also; these are likewise quickened and raised by Christ as God. Learn hence, 1. That God the Father hath communicated to Christ his Son a power to quicken and enliven such as are spiritually and corporally dead. 2. That the Father's communicating this power to the Son argues no inequality or inferiority in the Son, but he hath the same life infinitely, independently, and equally with the Father; *as the Father hath it, so hath the Son:* the Father hath it in himself, and so hath the Son also: therefore the Son as well as the Father is essentially and truly God. 3. Others, by the dead, understand those whom Christ raised from the dead, when he himself arose. When many of the bodies of the saints arose with him, Matt. xxvii. it being said, *The hour now is, &c. Dr. Whitby.*

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Our Saviour finding the Jews amazed and astonished at his declaring his sovereign and supreme authority and power to quicken and raise whom he pleased from the dead, doth in these verses assure them, that there should be a general resurrection, and an universal day of judgment, both of the righteous and the wicked, and a future distribution of rewards and punishments in another life, according to men's actions here in this life. *All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.* Here observe, 1. The certainty and universality of the resurrection of the dead declared: *The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall come forth.* Observe, 2. The powerful and efficacious mean by which this great and sudden change shall be effected and accomplished in the morning of the resurrection; namely, the omnipotent voice of Christ; *All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth.* 3. Here are the different ends of the resurrection declared, according to the difference of persons which shall then be raised, Good and Bad; *Those that have done good, to the resurrection of*

*life; and those that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.* Learn, 1. That there shall certainly be a resurrection of the body. 2. That all in the graves shall be raised, though not all alike: the wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ, as their Judge; the righteous shall be raised by virtue of their union with Christ as their Head. 3. According as men live in this world, and go out of it, so will they be found at the resurrection, without any change of their state; there will then be only two sorts of persons, good and bad. All that have done good, how small soever the degree of their goodness have been, shall be rewarded; and all that have done evil, shall be everlastingly punished; for all persons shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable, in the other world, accordingly as they manage their deportment and behaviour in this life: *They that have done good shall go, &c.*

30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

Here Christ declares to the Jews, and in them to all mankind, that they might assure themselves his judgment would be exactly righteous, because he had no private will or power of his own, contrary to or different from his Father. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ being the same in essence and nature, in power and operation, with the Father, had no private will or interest of his own, but acted all things as God, in co-ordination with the Father; and as man in subordination to him: *I can of mine own self do nothing*; that is, neither as God nor as Mediator; not as God, for God the Father and Christ being one, equal in power, what one person did, the other doth, not as a Mediator, for so Christ finished the work which his Father gave him to do; the will of the Father and the will of Christ being both one. As Christ was sent by his Father's order, so he was altogether guided by his Father's will, wherewith his own exactly concurred.

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. 32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

Our blessed Saviour having produced these five foregoing arguments to prove

his unity in essence, and his equality in power, with the Father, comes now to the end of the chapter, to produce several testimonies for the proof of it; and the first of them is the testimony of God his Father: *There is another that beareth witness of me, whose witness is true.* Now the Father had lately at Christ's baptism, by a voice from heaven, declared him to be his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased; which illustrious testimony, given to Christ, they had not regarded. Learn hence, That as Christ came into the world in obedience to his Father, and to bear witness to him; so did the Father honour him, and bear witness of him, and his testimony concerning his Son is undoubtedly true, and to be depended and rested upon; for we make the Father a liar, if we do not depend upon the record which he hath given of his Son.

33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. 34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

The second testimony to prove Christ to be the Messias, was that of John the Baptist. We read, *John i. 19.* how the Jews sent to enquire of him, Whether he were the Christ, or not? and he denied it, and pointed at *Jesus*, saying *Behold the Lamb of God*; yet would not the Jews abide by this testimony of John concerning the Messias. Nevertheless, says Christ, *I receive not testimony from John*; that is, "John by his testimony added nothing to me: I was what I was, and I am what I am, before John testified of me, and since." Learn hence, That the divinity of Christ's person, and the verity of his doctrine, needs no man's testimony for the confirmation of it, being sufficiently confirmed by Christ's own authority, and his Father's testimony: *I receive not testimony from man*: that is, "I need it not, I desire it not upon my own account, but upon yours only, that upon the credit of John's testimony ye might believe in me, and be saved by me: *These things I say that ye might be saved.*"

35 He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

Observe here, John's character, and the people's carriage. 1. John's character; he was a *light, a burning and a shining light*: he had in him a light of knowledge, to enlighten, direct, and comfort others:

and this his knowledge was accompanied with zeal; he was a *burning* light in his doctrine, and a *shining* lamp in his conversation; he had the light of knowledge in his head, the warmth of zeal in his heart, and the influence of both in his life. Learn hence, 1. That those whom God calls to the office and work of the ministry, he furnishes with abilities and endowments suitable to their great employments; he endows them with a light of knowledge, which is animated by the heat and warmth of zeal. 2. That ministerial gifts and abilities are not bestowed alike upon all, but dispensed variously. All are lights according to their measure, but all are not equally burning and shining lights for proportion and degree. 3. That the brightest burning, and clearest shining lights in the church of Christ, have but their time in this world; they are subject, as well as other men, to the common condition of mortality, and the lamps of their lives burn out the faster, by lighting others to heaven. *John was a burning and a shining light*: but now is put out and gone. Observe, 2. As John's character, so the people's carriage: *Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light*. Here is a threefold gradation; they rejoiced, they rejoiced in his light, and they rejoiced for a season. 1. *They rejoiced*. The word signifies, they leaped for joy, and danced about him as children do about a bonfire, when he first began his ministry among them. O, how warm are the affections of a people, when a pious and zealous minister comes first among them. 2. *They rejoiced in his light*, not in his heat. Or, they rejoiced in John's light, not in Christ's; for when they found that John bare record to Christ, they soon grew cold in their affections towards John. 3. *They rejoiced only for a season*; for an hour, as the word signifies. For a short time John's ministry was acceptable. Learn hence, 1. That it has been an old practice among professors, not to like their pastors long, though they have been never such burning and shining lights. John was not changed, but his hearers were changed; he did burn and shine in the candlestick of the church with equal zeal and lustre to the last; but they had changed their thoughts of him, and lost their esteem for him. Learn, 2. That as nothing in general is so mutable as the mind of man, so nothing in particular is so variable as the affections and opinions of people towards their mi-

nisters. The lamp of John's ministry was always alike, burning and shining; his oil did not waste, but his hearers' zeal wasted, and their affections cooled. Those whose gifts are not at all abated, may yet find a great abatement in the acceptance of their gifts; therefore let no man live upon the breath of men; least of all let ministers live upon the popular air, or the speech of the people. O, let us live upon the credit which we have with God, and rejoice chiefly in his esteem. If our performances find acceptance with God, we are safe and happy, though they fall under contempt with men.

36 But I have greater witness than *that* of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

The third testimony produced by Christ, to evidence and prove himself to be the promised Messias, and Saviour of the world, is that of his miracles; which by an omnipotent power, as God, he was enabled to work. Christ's miracles were speaking testimonies of his unity with the Father, and of the divinity of his person. Not so the miracles of his apostles; for he wrought his miracles in his own name, and by his own power and authority; but his apostles expressly declared the contrary, Acts iii. 12, 16. *Why look ye steadfastly on us, as if we by our own power had made this man whole? His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong*. Learn hence, That the testimony of Christ's own works, his miracles wrought in his own name, and by his own authority and power, is a clearer confirmation of his godhead, office, and doctrine, than the best of men's testimonies; yea, than John Baptist's own testimony, *That he saw the Spirit descending on him*.

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. 38 And ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

Here our blessed Saviour produces again the testimony of his Father, that he was the true and promised Messias: this was given him both at his baptism and his transfiguration;

when God the Father owned Christ to be his Son, by an audible voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Which testimony the Jews now ought the more to have regarded, because though their forefathers had heard the voice of God at certain times, *Erod. xx.* and *Deut. iv.* yet they in their times had never heard his voice. Learn hence, That the Father's immediate testimony of Christ from heaven, is greater than all the testimonies given to him here on earth; greater than John's, greater than his miracles. The presence of the glorious Trinity, when that testimony was given, *Matt. iii. ult.* made that witness most awful and solemn.

39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

The next testimony which Christ appeals to, is the testimony of the scriptures; that is, the writings of Moses and the prophets, which Christ bids the Jews diligently search, and they shall find that they abundantly testified of him, and that all the prophecies and types were fulfilled in him. The word *search*, signifying to search as men do for a golden mine in the bowels of the earth, which they must dig deep for, before they can come at; it intimates, 1. That there is an inestimable treasure lying hid in the holy scriptures, which we shall never fathom by a slight, superficial search. 2. That this inestimable treasure may be found out by the painful searcher; and it is the duty of all the members of the visible church to read and search the scriptures, which point out the way to eternal life.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Here our Saviour upbraids the Jews for their obstinate infidelity; that notwithstanding God the Father by a voice from heaven, and John the Baptist by his testimony on earth; notwithstanding all the miracles which they had seen wrought by Christ himself, and notwithstanding the scriptures, which they pretended so highly to esteem of, did prove him to be the Messiah, and the Author of eternal life, which they professed to seek; yet such was their obstinacy, that they would not come unto him, nor believe in him. *Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.* Hence observe, 1. A choice and inva-

luable mercy, which Christ stands ready to bestow upon poor sinners; and that is life, both spiritual and eternal. A life of grace, in order to a life of glory. Observe, 2. The gracious condition upon which this invaluable blessing may be had; and that is, upon coming to Christ, believing on him, and receiving of him. 3. Here is the true reason declared why sinners do miss of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, when he has so dearly purchased it for them, and does so freely tender it unto them, and that lies in their own wilfulness and obstinacy: *Ye will not come unto me.* Learn hence, That the true reason why so many sinners miss of salvation and eternal life, after all that Christ has done and suffered for them, is their own obstinacy and unwillingness to come to him, that they may have life. Man by nature has not only an inability, but a fixed enmity in his will against Jesus Christ.

41 I receive not honour from men. 42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. 43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

Here observe, 1. How little our Saviour sought the approbation and vain-glorious estimation of men: *I receive not honour from men.* The same should all his disciples and followers do; rest satisfied in the secret testimony and silent applause of their own consciences, without pumping for popular applause. Observe, 2. The dreadful sin which Christ charged upon the Jews, as the cause why they rejected him: *I know that ye have not the love of God in you.* O! deplorable state and case, to be void of all true love to God! Love being the spring of all action, and the root of all true obedience; he that loves God, will not only sweat at his work, but bleed at his work too, if his work cannot be carried on without bleeding. But where love of God is wanting, and no care to please God is found, his authority is despised, his Son rejected; as the Jews here would not come to Christ, that they might have life, because they had not the love of God in them. Observe, 3. The high affront which the Jews offered to the Son of God in preferring any seducers or impostors before him, who came in their own names; whilst he was rejected, who came in the name of his Father. Learn hence,

That though Christ was the great Ambassador of his Father, not a servant, but a son, and had his mission, his approbation, and his testimony, from heaven; yet so far did the perverseness and prejudices of the Jews prevail, that he was rejected, whilst impostors and deceivers, false christs and antichrists, without any evidence and authority from God, (because promising them a temporal kingdom,) were embraced and entertained: *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; but if another (a seducer) should come in his own name, him ye will receive.* As if Christ had said, You are incredulous to none but me; every deceiver, every cheat that has but wit or wickedness enough to tell you, "The Lord hath sent him," is believed by you; but though I come in my Father's name, showing a commission signed and sealed by him, and doing those works that none but a God can do, yet you receive me not. O unreasonable infidelity!

44 How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

Here Christ tells the Jews, that it is impossible they should believe aright in him, because they were so in love with the praise of men, that they would own him for the *Messias*, who could promise them a temporal kingdom, and in the mean time reject himself, who came authorized with the testimony and approbation of God; you will receive honour one of another, but reject the honour that cometh from God only. Learn, That such as ambitiously hunt after vain-glory and respect from men, do evidence themselves to be regardless of God's approbation and acceptance.

45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. 46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. 47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

*Think not that I will accuse you; that is, that I only will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses; that is, the writings of Moses, which you pretend to depend upon, and to trust to: for had you believed his writings, that is, the prophecies and types contained*

in his writings, you would have been led by them to believe in me; for they all pointed at me, and received their accomplishment in me: but if Moses cannot be heard by you, I must expect no authority with you. Learn, 1. That the whole scope of Moses' ceremonial law was to point out and prefigure Jesus Christ: Christ was the sum of the law, as well as the substance of the gospel; he was Abraham's promised Seed, Moses' great Prophet, Jacob's Shiloh, Isaiah's Emmanuel, Daniel's Holy One, Zechariah's Branch, and Malachi's Angel. 2. That such as believed the ancient prophecies before Christ came, did see their accomplishment in him, when he was come.

#### CHAP. VI.

**A**FTER these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

Observe here, How busy and industrious our holy Lord was about his Father's work, both on the sea and on the land, both by night and by day: *his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work.* Some have enquired into the reasons why Christ travelled by sea, as well as by land; and they seem to be these: 1. To show what was his intent in making the sea, namely, to be sailed upon, as the land was made to be walked upon. 2. That Christ might take occasion to manifest his deity in working miracles upon the sea, as well as upon the land. 3. Might it not be to comfort and encourage seafaring men, that dwell much upon the waters, in the midst of their distresses, to trust in and pray to such a Saviour, as had himself an experimental knowledge of the danger of the seas? Some have farther observed, That, after our Saviour's resurrection, we never find him sailing upon the seas more; for such a turbulent condition, which necessarily attends sea-voyages, was utterly inconsistent with the stability and perpetuity of Christ's state, when he was risen from the dead; the firm land better agreeing with his fixed estate, than the fluctuating water.

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

Observe here, what an exact knowledge Christ had, not only of all his followers,



but of the motives and principles which did induce them to follow him : it was not the excellency of his person, nor the heavenliness of his doctrine, that drew the multitude at this time after him, but the novelty of his miracles ; *They saw the miracles which he did.* It is better to feel one miracle wrought upon the heart, in changing and renewing that, than to see a thousand outward miracles wrought before our eyes.

3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. 5 When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat ? 6 And this he said to prove him : for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes : but what are they among so many ? 10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves : and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down ; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13 Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. 14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

This miracle of our Saviour's feeding five thousand persons with five barley-loaves and two small fishes, is recorded by all the four evangelists ; and several particulars therein are very remarkable. Observe, 1. What a poor and slender provision the Lord of the whole earth hath for his family, for himself, for his disciples, and the multitude ; nothing more than five barley loaves and two fishes. Teaching us, that these bodies of ours must be fed, not pampered. Our belly must not be our master, much less our god : And as the quality of the victuals was plain, so was the quantity small ; only five loaves and two fishes. Well might the disciples say, *What are they among so many ?* The eye of sense and reason sees an utter impossibility of those effects which faith can easily apprehend, and a divine power more easily produce. When men judge by sense and reason, and do not look to Christ's power, if extremities come, they are soon at their wit's end, and know not what to do. Observe, 2. How the great Master of this miraculous feast doth marshal his guests : he commanded them to sit down. None of the people reply, " Sit down ! but to what ? Here's the mouth, but where's the meat ? We may soon be set, but when shall we be served ? " Not a word like this, but they obey and expect. Lord, how easy it is to trust thy providence, and rely upon thy power, when there is corn in the barn, bread in the cupboard, money in the purse ! But when our stores are empty, when our stocks run low, and when we have nothing in hand, then to depend upon an invisible bounty is a noble act of faith indeed. Observe, 3. The actions performed by our blessed Saviour : 1. *He blessed the loaves* ; teaching us by his example never to use or receive the good creatures of God without prayer and praise, not to sit down to our food as a beast to his fodder. 2. Christ *broke the loaves* ; he could have multiplied them whole, why then doth he rather choose to do it in the breaking ? Perhaps to teach us, that we may rather expect his blessings in the distribution of his bounty, than in the reservation of it. Scattering is the way to increasing, and liberality the way to riches. Again, 3. *He gave to his disciples, that they might distribute to the multitude* : he did not do it with his own hands, but by theirs ; doubtless it was to gain reputation to his disciples, from the people. The same course doth Christ take in spiritual distributions. He that could feed the

souls of his people immediately by the hand of his Spirit, chooses rather by the hands of his ministers to divide the bread of life among them. Observe, 4. The reality and greatness of the miracle: *They did all eat, and were filled*; they did eat, not a crumb or a bit, but to satiety and fulness. All that were hungry did eat, and all that did eat were satisfied, and yet twelve baskets of fragments remain. More is left than what was at first set on. 'Tis hard to say which was the greatest miracle, the miraculous eating, or miraculous leaving. If we consider what they eat, we may wonder that they left any thing; if what they left, that they eat any thing. Observe lastly, These *fragments*, though of barley-loaves and fish-bones, must not be lost, but gathered up; we must exercise frugality in the enjoyment of the greatest plenty. Lord! how tremendous will their account be, who, having large and plentiful estates, do consume them upon their lusts! how will they wish they had been born to poverty and necessity, when they appear to make up their accounts before God!

15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

Here we have observable, The wonderful effect of the foregoing miracle; the people seeing so many thousands fed with five loaves, were so transported, that they concluded that Jesus was certainly the promised Messias. Now the notion they had of the Messias was this, that he should be a temporal Prince that should subdue all nations under his feet, and particularly free the Jews from the slavery of the Roman yoke, which was now upon their necks; forgetting what our Saviour had often told them, that his kingdom was not of this world, but within men; and that his business was to free men from soul-slavery, not from civil subjection; however, upon this mistake, the Jews here in a furious zeal designed to take Christ by force and make him their king; but our Saviour (who came not into the world to disturb the order of civil government) understanding their intentions, withdraws himself into a mountain, to avoid giving the least occasion for any such jealousy or suspicion. Hence learn, That although Jesus Christ be the great King of his church, and doth

exercise a spiritual kingdom in it, yet he came not into the world to be a temporal king, nor was his kingdom of this world, or ever designed to be prejudicial to the thrones of princes, and civil government of men. Therefore doth Christ withdraw himself, and refuse all this offer, as no ways agreeable to him, or consistent with his design.

16 And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, 17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. 18 And the sea arose, by reason of a great wind that blew. 19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. 20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. 21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

Observe here, The great danger the disciples were in, and the difficulties they encounter with, after they had enjoyed the sweet privileges of Christ's gracious presence with them. They were tossed upon a tempestuous sea. Learn thence, That it is not unusual, after sweet refreshments and manifestations of Christ unto his people, to meet with a stormy and sharp exercise of faith and patience; such was the lot of his disciples here: a constant gale of sweetness and uninterrupted course of prosperity and happiness, as it is not to be expected here, so neither can it be enjoyed here, without great peril and danger. Observe, 2. What haste our Saviour makes towards his disciples, when they were tossed upon a tempestuous sea: *Jesus drew nigh unto the ship*. Nothing can separate between, nor keep Christ from, his children and people in a suffering hour. He that waded through a sea of wrath to save his people, will walk upon a sea of water to succour and relieve them in an hour of tribulation. Observe, 3. The disciples not discerning Christ, not knowing him to be their Saviour, were afraid of him. Christ may be coming to save his people, and they not able at present to discern and apprehend him; but their fears may be highest, when their deliverer and deliverance is nearest.

Observe, 4. How speedily Christ relieves them of their fears, by telling them who he was: *It is I, be not afraid.* It is a sufficient support in all our afflictions to be assured of Christ's gracious presence with us. Say but, O Saviour, *It is I,* and then let evils do their worst; that one word, *It is I,* is sufficient to allay all storms, and to calm a thousand tempests. Observe lastly, With what joy and gladness the disciples received and entertained Christ in this hour of their distress: *They willingly received him into the ship.* Though the company of Christ is always sweet and welcome to his disciples and friends, yet never is it so very agreeable and desirable to them as in the hour of trial and temptation: then they willingly receive him, and joyfully welcome and entertain him.

22 The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that* his disciples were gone away alone; 23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias, nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks;) 24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. 25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? 26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Our blessed Saviour having wrought the foregoing miracle, feeding five thousand with five loaves, the people followed him in troops from place to place. Christ, who knew their hearts, tells them plainly what

was their end; they followed him indeed, but not for any spiritual excellences they saw in him, or soul-advantages they expected from him, but for bread; only to have their bellies fed with the loaves, not their souls satisfied with the bread of life. O! how seldom is Christ sought for his own sake, viz. *Jesus queritur propter Jesus.* Aug. How natural is it for men to seek Christ for sinister ends and by-respects! But to seek him only for outward advantages, is the basest of by-ends, and that which the soul of Christ exceedingly abhors. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth.* This prohibition must not be understood absolutely, but comparatively; not as if Christ intended to take them off from their lawful labours, and the business of their callings; but his meaning is, Labour not in the first and chief place for earthly things, which are all perishing, but for bread for your souls to live eternally by; even for the food of my heavenly doctrine, which will make them that feed upon it immortal: and this the Son of man stands ready to give unto you. *For him hath God the Father sealed;* that is, by a special commission and authority, hath empowered him to dispense all spiritual blessings to them that want and crave them. Learn hence, 1. That all the things of this life are perishing and fading. The best of outward comforts and enjoyments are meat that perisheth. 2. That it is the greatest of follies to labour intensely and inordinately for, and to set ourselves with all our might and strength to pursue and follow after, perishing things. 3. That Jesus Christ's holy doctrine, his heavenly grace, is food that never perisheth, nor diminisheth, how many soever partake of it; but makes all that partake thereof, to be partakers of eternal life therewith. 4. That Jesus Christ is authorized, sealed, and commissioned by his Father, to give eternal life to such as industriously labour after him, and will not be satisfied without him. *Him hath God the Father sealed;* that is, Jesus Christ was sealed to the office of Mediator by God the Father: Christ was sealed at his baptism, sealed by his doctrine, sealed by his miracles, sealed by his resurrection, sealed by his unction of supereminent and unparalleled sanctification. Lord! where will the rejecters of Christ then appear at the great day, who have despised the authority of him whom the Father commissioned to give eternal life to whosoever he pleaseth!

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, That ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Here the Jews, who were strict observers of the ceremonial law of Moses, and rested thereupon for salvation, enquire of our Saviour what they should do that they might please God? Christ directs them to the great duty of believing on himself, to own and acknowledge him to be the true Messiah, and as such to rely upon him alone for salvation: *This is the work of God, that ye believe, &c.* Learn hence, That for a penitent, humbled sinner to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a work highly pleasing and acceptable unto God. Christ calls faith *the work of God*, upon a three-fold account: it is the work of his efficiency and operation; 'tis the work of his commanding; and 'tis the work of his approbation and acceptance; a work that God is highly pleased with, and greatly delighted in: *This is the work of God.*

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? 31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Here the Jews tell our Saviour, that before they will believe in him, they must see some sign from him, to confirm his doctrine, and prove him to be the Messiah. They acknowledge Christ had wrought a great miracle in feeding five thousand persons with five barley-loaves, but Moses fed their fathers in the wilderness, who were no less than six hundred thousand persons, with excellent manna from heaven, and this for forty years together; from whence they would seem to conclude that they had more reason to believe Moses than Christ; not considering that Moses was but an instrument to obtain by prayer the manna at the hands of God; but Christ was an agent, and that, by a creating power inherent in himself, he multiplied the five loaves to the feeding of five thousand. Note here, from the Jews requiring a sign before they would believe, That he who publishes a new doctrine to the world ought to confirm

his mission by some miraculous operation. 2. That God honoured Moses, his messenger, very much, and Christ his minister much more, in that both of them wrought great and special miracles for the confirmation of their mission. 3. That the Jews' not believing Christ to be the true Messiah, upon so many attestations, and after his divine mission was confirmed by such miraculous operations, rendered their infidelity inexcusable, and their obstinacy invincible.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Upon the Jews mentioning manna to our blessed Saviour, he takes occasion to make a comparison betwixt himself the bread of life, and manna, the bread of Moses; and that in three particulars. 1. It was not Moses that gave the Israelites that manna, it was God at the prayer of Moses; but it was God that now offered them the bread of life, were they willing to accept it. 2. The manna was not given from heaven, that is, from the celestial heaven, but only from the air and clouds, which frequently in scripture is called heaven; but Christ the bread of life was given and sent by the Father from the highest heaven, even the heaven of glory. 3. Manna was not true spiritual food effectively and of itself, but bodily food only; but Christ is real and spiritual bread, which gives life to lost and dead men; which manna did not, could not do. And whereas manna was peculiar to Israel alone, Christ gives life to all sorts of persons, Gentiles as well as Jews: *The bread of God giveth life unto the world.* Learn hence, That as Christ is the truth and substance of all types in the Old Testament, so particularly the manna was an illustrious type of Christ. In many things they agree; and in some they differ. They agree in their original; manna came down from above, so did Christ; manna was freely given, so is Jesus Christ the free gift of God; manna was not fit to be eaten as it lay in the field, but must be ground in a mill, or beaten in a mortar, and baked in an oven, before it was fit for food. Christ was ground by his sufferings, bruised on the cross, scorched in the fiery oven of his

Father's wrath, that he might become a fit Saviour for us. Again, as the manna was gathered by the Israelites daily and equally; it was rained down about their tents, and every man had his omer. Thus is Christ in the ministry of the word daily offered to a lost world, and all that believe in him shall share alike in the benefits of the justification, sanctification, and glorification from him. But now the manna and Christ differ in this; and the true excels the type thus: There is a quickening, enlivening virtue, a life-giving and a life-upholding power in Christ, the bread of life, which was never found in manna, the bread of Israel. And whereas manna only fed the body of an Israelite, and this only for a little time in the wilderness; Christ nourisheth the soul, the souls of all believers, be they Jew or Gentile, bond or free, and this not for a time, but for eternity: *The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. 36 But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not.

Observe here, 1. How the carnal Jews, hearing of the bread which Christ had commended so highly, and conceiving of it carnally, desire they may partake of it constantly: *Lord, evermore give us this bread.* The commendation of spiritual things may move the affections and quicken the desires of natural persons; but if their desires be not spiritual and serious, diligent and laborious, constant and abiding, they are no evidence of the truth of grace. Observe, 2. Christ discovers another excellent effect of this bread of life, which he had been recommending; that such as feed of it *shall never hunger more*: that is, inordinately, after the perishing satisfactions of this world; but shall find an all-sufficient fulness in him, and complete refreshment from him, for the preserving and perpetuating of their spiritual life: *He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, &c.* Observe, 3. How justly Christ upbraids the Jews for their obstinate infidelity: *Ye have seen me, says our Saviour, yet ye believe not.* Ye have seen me in the flesh, you

have heard my doctrine, you have seen my miracles; I have done amongst you those works which never any man did, to convince you that I am the Messiah, yet you will not own me to be such, nor believe in me. O the strength of infidelity and unbelief! The devil has as great an advantage upon men by making them strong in unbelief, as God hath by making his people strong in faith.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Our blessed Saviour having lamented the obstinate infidelity of the Jews in the foregoing verses, who, though they had seen him, would not believe on him; he doth in this verse comfort himself with the assured expectation, that there would be a number, which should certainly and infallibly come unto him: *All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, &c.* Here observe, 1. An account of the persons that shall come to Christ, *All that the Father hath given him.* There is a double gift of us to Christ. 1. In God's eternal purpose and counsel. 2. In our effectual vocation and calling, when our hearts are by the Holy Spirit of God persuaded and enabled to accept of Christ, as he is freely tendered us in the gospel. Observe, 2. The gracious entertainment which Christ gives to those that come unto him: *He will in no wise cast them out*; where the positive is included in the negative, *I will not cast them out*: that is, I will kindly receive, and graciously entertain them. Learn hence, 1. That both God the Father and Christ his Son are unfeignedly willing, and cordially desirous, of the salvation of lost sinners. That federal transaction which was betwixt the Father and the Son from everlasting, about the salvation of lost sinners, evidently declares this. Learn, 2. That the merciful and compassionate Jesus will in no wise cast out or reject, but kindly entertain and receive, every penitent sinner that doth believably apply unto him for pardon of sin and eternal life: *I will in no wise cast out*; that is, I will not cast them out of my pity and compassion, out of my love and affection, out of my prayer and intercession, out of my care and protection: I will not cast them out of my covenant; I will never cast them out of my kingdom; for my nature inclines me, my promise binds me, and my office as Mediator engages me, to the contrary

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, That of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

In these words our Saviour gives us the confirmation of the foregoing promise, that he will in no wise cast out those that come unto him, by assuring us, that it was the great end for which he came into the world. His Father sent him to do his will, and not his own; that is, not to do his own will without his Father's, but to do his own will and his Father's. For Christ, as God, hath a co-ordinate will with his Father's, and as man, a will subordinate to the will of his Father. Now it is the will of both Father and Son, that such as believe in him should be preserved from perishing, and be raised up by Christ at the last day. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ stands not only inclined by his own mercy and goodness to save repenting and believing sinners, but doth also stand obliged thereunto by virtue of a trust committed to him from the Father. Therefore Christ mentions the will of him that sent him, as a reason of his fidelity in this matter. Learn, 2. That the Father's will and good pleasure is the original source, the fountain and first spring, from whence the salvation of believers doth proceed and flow. *It is the Father's will that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.* Learn, 3. That such as are given to Christ by the Father, and put as his trust into his keeping, he looks upon them as his charge, and stands engaged for the preservation of them. *This is my Father's will, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing.* Yet hath the Father so committed the care of believers to his Son, as that he keeps them still in his own hand, John x. 21, 28. *My Father which gave them to me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* Learn, 4. From those words, *I will raise him up at the last day*, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly,

essentially, and really God. That person who can by his own almighty power raise the dead, must certainly be God. And this power Christ had. He raised others from the dead, and his own dead body from the grave also, by his own power; and therefore Christ says, *I am the resurrection and the life; and I will raise him up at the last day.* Doubtless he that spake these words, and made these promises, knew his own power to perform them; and that power must be omnipotent, and that act of omnipotence doth prove him to be God. 'Tis true, the disciples raised the dead, who yet were not God, but with this difference, they raised the dead by Christ's power; but Christ raised others and himself also by his own power.

41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. 42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? 43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

Although Christ had in the foregoing verses plainly asserted himself to be the true bread that came down from heaven for the benefit of the world, yet the Jews, understanding his words carnally, are offended with him, and murmur at him, for pretending to come down from heaven, when they knew him to be the son of Joseph and Mary. They understood nothing of his divine nature, nor of his miraculous conception by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and therefore were highly offended at him. Thence learn, That ignorance of Christ's divine nature was the ground and occasion of that contempt which was cast upon his person. Observe farther, The proof which Christ gave of his divine nature, in his knowing the hearts and thoughts of these murmuring Jews: *Jesus said, Murmur not among yourselves.* Christ knows and observes the most secret murmurings and repinings that are found in the breasts of the children of men; and this his knowledge is an evidence and proof of his divinity, that he is truly and really God.

44 No man can come to me, ex-

cept the Father which hath sent me draw him : and I will raise him up at the last day.

In which words we have something necessarily implied, and something positively expressed. The misery of man in his natural and unsanctified state is here implied ; he is far distant from Christ, and unable of himself to come unto him. By nature we are strangers, yea, enemies unto God ; enemies to the holiness of his nature, and to the righteousness of his laws : and as the state of unregeneracy is a state of enmity, so consequently must it be a state of impotency : *Without me* (therefore says Christ) *ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. that is, without interest in me, and influences of grace derived from me. Again, the truths we have expressed are these : 1. That all those who come unto Christ are drawn unto him. 2. That the drawing of sinful souls unto Jesus Christ is the special and peculiar work of God. This drawing is a powerful act but not a compulsory act ; God doth not draw any against their wills to Christ, but he inclines the wills of sinners to come unto him. He draws by effectual persuasion, and not by violent compulsion. 3. That all those who are drawn to Christ here, shall be raised up gloriously by him hereafter : *I will raise him up at the last day*. Such as are brought to Christ by the Father, Christ shall never abandon them, till he has raised them up at the last day, and presented them blameless and complete before his Father ; where they shall ever be with the Lord.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God ; he hath seen the Father. 47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

In these words our blessed Saviour confirms his former assertion, concerning the Father's drawing, from the prophecies of the Old Testament, which, speaking of the lays of the Messiah, foretold that persons should be taught of God to embrace the Messiah ; whence Christ inferreth, that every one who is thus taught, shall come

unto him, and believe in him. Learn hence, 1. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every man that cometh unto Christ in the way of faith. 2. That such shall not miscarry in the way of faith, who are under the special teachings and instructions of God : *They shall be all taught of God*, and he teacheth to profit, and that not only authoritatively, but efficaciously and effectually. Those whom God undertakes to teach, receive from him both an ear to hear, and an heart to understand. *They shall be all taught of God*, and they that are taught have heard and learned of the Father.

48 I am that bread of life. 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

In these verses our blessed Saviour resumes his former doctrine, namely, that he is the object of saving faith, and the bread of life, which he compares with the manna, the bread of Israel, *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness*, which manna was an illustrious type of Christ. Thus both came down from heaven ; both were freely given of God without any merit or desert of man ; both in a miraculous manner ; both at first unknown what they were, and whence they came ; both equally belonging to all ; both sufficient for all, poor and rich. The manna, white in colour, so clear is our Lord's innocence ; pleasant like honey, so sweet are his benefits ; beaten and broken before eaten, Christ on his cross bleeding and dying ; given only in the wilderness, and ceasing as soon as they came into the land of promise ; as sacraments shall vanish, when we enjoy the substance in heaven. But though manna was thus excellent, yet the eaters of it were dead ; but such as feed upon Christ, the bread of life, shall live eternally in bliss and glory. *I am the living bread which came down from heaven : If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever*. Here we learn, 1. What a miserable

creature man naturally is, in a pining and starved condition, under the want of soul-food. 2. That Jesus Christ is the food of souls, which quickens them that are dead, and is unto the needy soul all that it can need; such spiritual food as will prove a remedy and preservative against death, both spiritual and eternal. *I am the living bread.*

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat?

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. 59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

Observe here, How the Jews, understanding Christ after a carnal manner, were offended at what he had said: for they thought, it was inhuman to eat man's flesh, and could not understand how the body of Christ could in such a sense be food to all the world. Hence note, That carnal persons put a carnal sense upon Christ's spiritual words, and so occasion their own stumbling. But yet notwithstanding the Jews' stumbling at yet Saviour's expression, he doth not alter his words, but presseth more and more the necessity of feeding upon him by faith, in order to eternal life: *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* Learn from thence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the true spiritual food of all believers. 2. That those, and only those, who by faith feed upon him, shall obtain a life of grace and glory from him; if we do but by faith feed upon him, we

can have no evidence for a life of grace, nor title to a life of glory. This place some papists produce to countenance the doctrine of transubstantiation, and a bodily eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament. But it is evident that Christ treats not of the sacrament in this chapter, for the sacrament was not now instituted; therefore it is not a sacramental, but a spiritual feeding upon Christ by faith, that is here meant. For this eating gives life to the eater; all that eat are saved, and all that do not eat are damned. But this is not true of a sacramental eating. Besides, this eating which Christ speaks of, he makes absolutely necessary to salvation; but some are saved that never fed upon Christ in the sacrament, as John the Baptist, and the thief on the cross. Lastly, if it be understood of a sacramental eating and drinking, woe be to the church of Rome, for denying the cup to the laity; because drinking of Christ's blood is here made as necessary as eating of his flesh, in order to eternal life. *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* Observe farther, The close and intimate union which is betwixt Christ himself, and those that feed upon him: *He that eateth me, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* As meat is turned into the eater's substance, so believers and Christ become one; and by feeding on him, that is, by believing on him, there followeth a mutual inhabitation; Christ dwelleth in them, and they in him: this is true of a spiritual feeding upon Christ, but not of a sacramental eating. Nay, Christ carries it higher still, and tells us, that there is a real union between the Father and him; and as the Father lives who sent him, having an eternal fountain of life in himself, and the Son lives by the Father, having the same life communicated to him with his essence from the Father; in like manner (says Christ) he that eateth me, the same shall live by me. All which is certainly true of our spiritual feeding upon Christ by faith; but cannot be applied to a corporal feeding on him in the sacrament, as the papists would have it.

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, this is an hard saying; who can hear it? 61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, doth this offend you? 62 *What* and if ye shall



see the Son of man ascend up where he was before ?

The foregoing doctrine of our Saviour concerning eating his flesh and drinking his blood, sounded so very harshly, that not only the common multitude, but some of them that had been his disciples, that is, who had given up their names to follow him, could not tell how to bear it. Our Saviour reproves their unjust stumbling at what he had said, that he was the bread which came down from heaven ; and tells them, that his ascension into heaven should prove the truth of his descent from heaven. Hence we learn, That Christ's arising from the grave, and ascending into heaven by his own power, is an evident proof of his godhead, and that he really came down from heaven, in respect of his divine nature, which condescended to be clothed with our flesh. *What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before.*

63 It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

To convince the Jews that our Saviour did not mean a carnal and fleshly eating of his body, he tells them, that such an eating would profit nothing ; but it is a spiritual eating of him by faith, that bringeth that quickening life of which he had spoken. *It is the Spirit*, or divine nature, *that quickeneth ; the flesh* or human nature alone, separated from his godhead, *profiteth nothing*, and can give no life. Learn hence, That it is the godhead of Christ, united to the human nature, which adds all virtue, efficacy, and merit, to the obedience and sufferings of the human nature. *It is the Spirit*, or divine nature of Christ, *that quickeneth ; the flesh*, or human nature alone, *profiteth nothing* ; and therefore the carnal eating of his flesh would do no good.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, That no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Our blessed Saviour having thus cleared his doctrine, that he was the bread of life which came down from heaven, and that he is not to be carnally, but spiritually fed upon ; he plainly tells the Jews, that the true cause of their stumbling at this doctrine, was their ignorance and unbelief : *There are some of you that believe not.* Upon which plain dealing of our blessed Saviour's, many unsound professors did wholly forsake him, and accompanied no longer with him. Learn hence, That multitudes who have long professed Christ and his holy religion, may draw back, and fall from their profession, and finally revolt from him. 2. That it is an evil heart of unbelief which causes men to depart from Christ, and to make shipwreck of their profession.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away ? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. 70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil ? 71 He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son* of Simon : for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

Our Saviour finding many of his nominal disciples forsaking him, and departing from him, asks his apostles, (the twelve) whether they would also go that way ? intimating that their departure would go nearer to him, than the departure of all the rest. The nearer they are, from whom we receive unkindnesses, the nearer do these unkindnesses go to our hearts : *Will you also, the twelve, go away ?* Peter, as the mouth, and in the name of the rest, answers, That they knew none besides to whom they could go, and expect the happiness which they did from him. They that go from Christ, can never hope to mend themselves, let them go whither they will ; therefore 'tis as irrational, as it is sinful, to depart from Christ, *who hath the words*, that is, the promises, *of eternal life.* Observe lastly, St. Peter having made this profession for himself and the rest of the twelve, that they would not depart from Jesus, whom they believed to be the true Messiah, the Son of God ; Christ intimates to Peter, that his charity was something too large in promising so much for them all ; for there

was one traitor among them, whose heart was open to Christ as his face was to them; he meant it of Judas Iscariot, of whose perfidiousness he gave them warning at this time. Learn hence, That the better any man is in himself, the more charitable is the opinion which he has of others. Charity inclines to believe others good, till they discover themselves to be bad. Learn, 2. That Christ doth approve of our charitable judgment of others' sincerity, according to what we hope and believe, though we happen to be mistaken, and our judgment is not according to truth! Christ knew Judas to be an hypocrite at this time, but doth not reprove Peter for having a better opinion of him than he deserved. 'Tis far better to err on the charitable than on the censorious hand; 'tis less offensive to Christ, and less injurious to ourselves.

## CHAP. VII.

**A**FTER these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

Our blessed Saviour knowing that the rage of the chief priests and Pharisees in Judea and at Jerusalem, was grown to that height, that they were resolved to kill him; to avoid their fury, he resolves to continue in Galilee, and would not come into Judea at present, nor go up to Jerusalem into the mouth of his enemies, his hour being not yet come. Learn hence, That so long as it was necessary for Christ to save and preserve himself from danger, he was pleased to use the ordinary means for his own preservation; namely, retirement and withdrawing himself; Christ as God could have rid himself out of the hands of his enemies by a miraculous preservation; but he uses the ordinary means when they would serve the turn. And as he would not decline danger when his hour was come, so would he not run before it was come, but used all prudential means and methods for his own safety and preservation. *He would not come into Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him.*

2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

There were three great feasts which the Jews celebrated every year; namely, the feast of the passover, the feast of pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles. This last was

observed in the month of September, after they had gathered in the fruits of the earth; whence it was also called the feast of ingathering. At this feast they went out of their houses, and dwelt in booths seven days, in remembrance of their living in tents or booths in the wilderness for forty years together, before they came to Canaan. Now the institution of this feast, being to call Israelites to remembrance of their former condition in the wilderness, teaches us how prone and ready we are to forget our troubles, and the mercies wherewith our troubles have been sweetened, when once they are past and over. The Jews when settled in Canaan, going out of their houses yearly, and dwelling in booths, did thereby testify, that present mercies had not made them forget former trials and troubles.

3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. 4 For *there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly.* If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. 5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

Observe here, 1. The advice which Christ's brethren, that is, his kindred, gave him, to render himself more famous and publicly known to the world; they advise him not to stay any longer in Galilee, an obscure place, but to go into the more noble and populous country of Judea, and work miracles there. But what high presumption was this in creatures to prescribe to Christ, and direct him whither to go, and what to do! Observe, 2. The reason they offer for their advice; For no man that seeketh to be known openly, will do any thing in secret: that is, If thou wilt be thought to be the Messiah by thy working miracles, do them not in a corner; but go up to Jerusalem with us at the next feast, that the great men may take notice of them. Such as hunt after reputation themselves, and are ambitious of vain-glory and commendation from men, measure others, even the most holy and religious, by their own inclinations and dispositions; and wonder that others do not follow their measures for gaining reputation and respect. Thus did our Lord's brethren here; but the wonder ceases, if we consider the following words: *Neither did his brethren believe*

*in him.* It is no new thing for the holiest servants of God to meet with great trials from their graceless friends. Christ met with this before us; his kindred according to the flesh not believing in him, were a sore trial and temptation to him. Some martyrs have confessed, that the hardest work they have met withal, has been to withstand the temptation, the tears, and entreaties of their dearest and nearest relations.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. 7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. 8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. 9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

Here we have Christ's answer and refusal returned to his brethren's desires: he tells them, that they might go up to the feast of Jerusalem when they pleased, and as publicly: but it was not fit for him to appear so publicly, because the doctrine which he taught was odious to the Pharisees, and the prevailing power at Jerusalem; he therefore resolves to go up privately, that he might not stir up the jealousy of the Sanhedrim: but for them, they were out of danger of the world's hatred, for being the children of it, the world would love its own; but him it hated, because he re-proved its sins. Where we may remark, That though our Lord Jesus Christ was most freely willing and ready to lay down his life for sinners, when the time was come that God the Father called for it; yet he would not expose his life to hazard and danger unseasonably. Teaching us by his example, as not to decline sufferings when God calls us to them; so not to tempt God by running into them, when we may inoffensively avoid them. *Your time is always ready, mine is not yet come.*

10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. 11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? 12 And there was much murmuring among the people concern-

ing him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. 13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him, for fear of the Jews.

Observe here, How our blessed Saviour, who came to fulfil the law, goes up to Jerusalem at the Jewish feast, according to the command of God, *Exod. xxiii. Three times a year shall all thy males appear before me.* Christ, being made under the law, sheweth a punctual obedience to the law, and fulfilled it in his own person. Observe, 2. The different opinions which the Jews at Jerusalem do express concerning our Saviour: some allowing him the charitable character of being a good man; others traducing him as being a deceiver of the people. Our dear Lord, we see, when here on earth, passed through evil report and good report. Is it any wonder to find the friends of Christ branded with infamy and reproach, when Christ himself passed under the infamous character of a deceiver of the people? Some allowed him to be a good man: but others said, *Nay, but he deceiveth the people.*

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. 15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? 16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. 17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. 18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Observe here, 1. Though Christ went up to Jerusalem privately, lest he should stir up the jealousy of the Pharisees against himself unseasonably; yet went he into the temple, and taught publicly. His example teaches us thus much, "That although the servants of Christ may for a time, and in some cases, withdraw themselves from apprehended danger, yet, when God calls them to appear openly, they must do it courageously, without shrinking, though the danger be still impending." Jesus went up to Jerusalem, entered the temple, and taught. Observe, 2.

So admirable was our holy Lord's doctrine, that the Jews marvelled how he should come to the knowledge of such divine mysteries, considering the meanness of his education. They were struck with admiration, but they wanted faith; whereas the least degree of saving faith is beyond all admiration without it. Observe, 3. Our Lord vindicates his doctrine, telling the Jews, that the doctrine he delivered was not his own; that is, not of his own inventing and devising. It was no contrivance of his, nor was it taught him by men; but received by him immediately from the Father, whose ambassador and great prophet he was. Again, when Christ says, *My doctrine is not mine*, that is, not only mine, but my Father's and mine. For as he was God equal with the Father, so he naturally knew all his counsels; and as man, had knowledge thereof by communication from his Godhead.—Learn hence, That the doctrine of the gospel is a doctrine wholly from God: he contrived it, and sent his own Son into the world to publish and reveal it. Christ was sent, and his doctrine was not his own, but his that sent him. Observe, 4. A double rule given by our Saviour, whereby the Jews might know, whether the doctrine he preached were the doctrine of God. First, If a man walk uprightly, and doth the will of God in the best manner according to his knowledge: *If any man will do his will, he shall know of my doctrine whether it be of God*. There is no such way to find out truth as by doing the will of God. The second rule, by which they might know that his doctrine was from God, was this, Because he sought his Father's glory, and not his own, in the delivery of it: *He that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true*. Hence learn, That the nature and scope of that doctrine which Christ delivered, eminently tending not to promote his own private glory, but the glorifying of his Father, is an undoubted proof and evidence that his doctrine was of God.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? 20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. 22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, (not because it is of Mo-

ses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man. 23 If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day?

Observe here, 1. That our Lord, having vindicated his doctrine in the former verses, comes now to vindicate his practice in healing the impotent man on the sabbath-day, for which the Jews sought his life, as a violation of the fourth commandment given by Moses. Our Saviour tells them, That, notwithstanding their pretended zeal for the law of Moses, they more notoriously broke the sixth commandment, by going about to kill him, an innocent person, than he had broken the fourth commandment by making a man whole on the sabbath-day. Hence learn, That it is damnable hypocrisy when men pretend a great zeal for the sins of others, and do allow and tolerate worse in themselves. This is for their practice to give their profession the lie: the Jews condemn our Saviour for a supposed breach of the fourth commandment; whilst they are guilty themselves of a real breach of the sixth commandment. Observe, 2. The ignominy and reproach which the Jews fix upon our blessed Saviour in the height of their rage and fury against him: *Thou hast a devil*. The King of saints in heaven, as well as the whole host of saints on earth, has been frequently smitten and deeply wounded with reproach. Christ was reproached for our sake, and when we are reproached for his sake, he takes our reproach as his own. Moses' reproach was the reproach of Christ, *Heb. xi. 26*. And he esteemed it a treasure, which did more enrich him with its worth, than press him with its weight: *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*. Observe, 3. The wonderful meekness of Christ, in passing over this reproach and calumny, without one word of reply. Guilt is commonly clamorous and impatient, but innocence is silent and regardless of misreports. Our Saviour is not at the pains of a word to vindicate himself from their impotent censure, but goes on with his discourse, and justifies his own action, in healing a man on the sabbath-day, from the Jews' own practice in circumcising their children

on that day, if it happen to be the eighth day : and the argument runs thus ; " If circumcision may be administered to a child on the sabbath-day, which is a servile kind of work and bodily exercise, without blame or censure, why must I fall under censure, for healing a man on the sabbath-day, thoroughly and perfectly, only by a word speaking ? " Hence learn, That the law of doing good, and relieving the miserable at all times, is a more ancient and excellent law, than either that of the sabbath rest, or of circumcision upon the eighth day. A ritual law must and ought to give place to the law of nature, which is written in every man's heart. As if our Lord had said, " If you may wound a man by circumcision on the sabbath-day, may I not heal one ? If you may heal on that day one member of the circumcised, may I not make a man whole every whit ? If you be at pains to cure such a one with your hand, may not I without pains cure a man with the word of my mouth ? "

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

From the foregoing argument Christ draws an inference or conclusion, That there is no making a judgment according to the first appearance of things ; and that suddenness or rashness, prejudice or partiality, in judging, overthrows righteous judgment. This is the general application of what Christ had said before : and the particular application of it, as to himself, comes to this, *Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment* : as if Christ had said, " Lay aside your prejudices against my person, and compare these cases attentively and impartially with one another ; and then see whether you can justly condemn me as a sabbath-breaker and acquit yourselves. Such was the perfect innocency of our Saviour's actions, that he could and did submit them to the reason and judgment of his very enemies.

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he whom they seek to kill ? 26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ ? 27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is : but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. 28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught,

saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am : and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. 29 But I know him : for I am from him, and he hath sent me. 30 Then they sought to take him : but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. 31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done ?

Our blessed Saviour having vindicated both his doctrine and practice, and appeared publicly in the temple, and speaking boldly there, the people of Jerusalem knowing the hatred and enmity of the chief priests and rulers against him, do wonder that they did not apprehend him. Learn, 1. Almighty God doth and can preserve his own, in the faithful discharge of their duty, in such an admirable manner, that even their enemies themselves may wonder at it, and be astonished with it. Observe, 2. The argument which the Jews urged against our Saviour's being Christ, and the promised Messiah, namely, that they *know whence he was*, whereas, *when the Messiah cometh, no man shall know whence he is* ; now herein they assert a manifest untruth ; for though Christ, in respect of his godhead, was prefigured by Melchizedek, who was without father or mother, without descent ; (that is, without any that the scripture mentions ; ) yet in respect of his human nature, the Jews might know whence he was ; for the scripture plainly pointed out the tribe, the family, the lineage, and the place of his birth. Observe, 3. That Christ, being grieved at this impudent cavil, doth reply unto it with much boldness and zeal ; he cried, saying, *Ye both know me, and whence I am ; but the Father that sent me ye know not*. That is, " You know me as a man, where I was born, and of what family I am : but you know not my divine nature, nor the Father from whom I am by eternal generation, and who hath sent me into the world." Observe, 4. What causeless rage appeared in these men against Christ, for declaring the truth unto them ; they would have taken him by violence, had not the power and providence of God restrained them for the present, because his time to suffer was not yet come. Hence learn,

That violence and persecution against the faithful dispensers of the truths of God, have been the lot and portion of such in all ages and generations: Christ experienced it; let his ministers expect it. 5. That although the rulers at Jerusalem were angry and enraged, yet the meaner and inferior sort of people believed on him, being convinced by the wonderful miracles which he had wrought amongst them, that he was the true and promised Messias. For, say they, whenever the Messias comes, *he cannot do greater and more evident miracles than this man hath done.* Learn hence, That although the grace of God be not insured to, or entailed upon, any sort of people; yet ordinarily it is the meaner sort of people with whom it prevails most. Many of the common people at Jerusalem were believing, when the rulers there were persecuting: men that live in pleasure and at ease, see no need of dependence upon God; have little inclination or desire to further the gospel, and to encourage either the dispensers or professors of it, nay, it is well if they do not turn persecutors.

32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him: and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. 33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while I am with you, and *then* I go unto him that sent me. 34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come. 35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? 36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and, where I am, *thither* ye cannot come?

Observe here, 1. How enraged the Pharisees were, when they heard that so many of the common people were brought to believe in Christ, and to cleave unto Christ, inasmuch that they sent public officers, armed with authority to apprehend our blessed Saviour: *The Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to take him.* Learn thence, That nothing more enrages the enemies of religion, and draws trouble on the preach-

ers and professors of it, than the success which the gospel at any time meets with. Observe, 2. Our Saviour tells them, that as they desired to be rid of him, so ere long they should have their desire: he would leave them, and go to his Father, and in his absence they would wish for his bodily presence again, but should not have it. Learn, The despisers of Christ have little cause to be weary of him, and to seek to put him away by violence and persecution; for their obdinate contempt of him will cause him to depart from them, and finally to forsake them. Observe, 3. How the Jews, not understanding our Saviour's words aright, reasoned among themselves whether, by leaving of them, he meant to go into some pagan country, and teach the Gentiles the mysteries of the Jewish religion; which above all things they could not endure to hear. Learn hence, That it is the ordinary sin of a people privileged with the means of grace, not to be sensible of the hazard or danger of Christ's leaving and forsaking them; till at last he forsakes them finally, and casts them off to their inevitable and unutterable condemnation. Thus did our Lord deal with the Jews here: *I go my way, and whither I go ye cannot come.*

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

The feast of tabernacles (which is the feast here meant) lasted eight days; the first and last of which were to be kept holy with religious assemblies and sacrifices; and it was a custom among the Jews, upon that solemn day, to offer up a pot of water unto God, which they drew out of the fountain of Siloam: with reference to this custom, Christ here cries with a loud voice, inviting the people to fetch and draw from him, as from a living fountain, all the sanctifying gifts and saving graces of the Holy Spirit. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ is the original and fountain of all saving grace, whom if we thirst after, repair to, and by faith depend upon as Mediator, we shall certainly receive what influences of grace soever we want and stand in need of.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Here again Christ alludes to a Jewish custom : the Jews were wont at fountains to build great vessels of stone, and in the midst or belly of them to have pipes, through which the water passed ; " Now, (says Christ,) thus shall it be with every one that believeth on me ; he shall be abundantly filled with the Spirit of God, in all the sanctifying and saving graces of it." Christ and his holy Spirit are a living fountain, whose waters never fail ; they are not a water-brook, but a spring of waters ; we shall never miss of the waters of life, if we seek unto, and wait upon, Christ for them : *For if we believe on him, out of our belly shall flow rivers of living water, sufficient for ourselves, and wherewith to refresh others.*

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive : for the Holy Ghost was not yet given ; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

These words are the evangelist St. John's commentary upon the foregoing promise ; he tells us, that Christ spoke this of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which did accompany the descent of the Holy Ghost, at the feast of Pentecost. *For the Holy Ghost was not yet given ; that is, not so plentifully given : because Jesus was not yet glorified.* Learn hence, That although the Spirit was in some measure given by God from the beginning to good men, yet the more plentiful effusion of it was deferred till the ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ.

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. 41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee ? 42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was ? 43 So there was a division among the people, because of him. 44 And some of them would have taken him ; but no man laid hands on him.

In these verses an account is given of the various effects which our Lord's foregoing sermon had upon his hearers' hearts : some were so affected with it, that they believed

him to be the great prophet promised to Israel, *Deut. xviii. 18.* Others apprehended him to be the Christ ; others contradict both, supposing him to be born, not at Bethlehem, but in Galilee. And upon this diversity of opinions, there arose a division amongst them ; and some had a mind to have apprehended him, but by an overruling providence they were restrained from the doing of it at present. Learn hence, That diversity of opinions in matters of religion, even concerning Christ himself, have been even from the beginning. Some accounted him a prophet, others the Messiah ; some thought him neither, but a grand impostor and deceiver. Our dear Lord, when here on earth, passed through evil report and good report ; let his followers expect and prepare for the same : for innocence itself cannot protect from slander and false accusation.

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees ; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him ? 46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. 47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived ? 48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him ? 49 But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed.

Observe here, 1. How God restrained the rage and malice of Christ's enemies, till his hour was come : the officers of the chief priests, who were sent forth with a commission to apprehend him, returned without him ; but with this honourable mention of him in their mouths. *Never man spake like this man.* Such is the power of Christ's doctrine, that even those that come unto it with prejudice, and with a persecuting purpose, may be surprised by it, and though not converted, yet bridled and restrained. The preaching of the gospel doth sometimes restrain the violence of the hand, when it works no change in or upon the heart. Thus it was with these poor officers. Observe, 2. That the Pharisees being more enraged at the reason which the officers gave for neglecting their office, than for the neglect itself, upbraid them that they should suffer themselves to be so deceived, whereas none of the grandees, or learned rabbies, had owned him ; only an accused crew of ignorant people followed him, and doted on

him. Here note, That when Christ came into the world, the great ones of the world not only refused to believe on him, but boasted of their unbelief, as an argument of their wisdom. *Have any of the rulers believed on him?* O no, they were too wise to believe! Faith is left to fools, and accounted folly by those wise men. Nay; farther, they count the common people cursed, who did believe on Christ. O prodigious stupidity! to account them accursed, who received Jesus Christ the chiefest blessing. Great men have not always the wisdom of a man, but more seldom have they the wisdom of a real christian. Great in honour, wise in understanding, are a sweet couple, but seldom seen together.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) 51 Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth? 52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. 53 And every man went unto his own house.

Here observe, 1. How God stirs up Nicodemus, though he durst not openly own Christ, yet to plead for him, that he might not be condemned before heard; this was a common rule of justice, and nothing but what might have been said on behalf of the greatest malefactor; he could not well have said less; but God so ordered it, that it was enough to divert the storm from falling upon Christ at this time. One word shall be sufficient to blow over a persecution, when God will have it so. Observe, 2. They answer Nicodemus with a taunt, a mock, and a scorn, that no prophet ever did rise out of Galilee, nor ever should. Therefore Christ, arising out of Galilee, as they thought, could be no prophet. Observe, lastly, That though they were more and more enraged, yet they disperse without concluding any thing against Christ, for that time every one went to his own home. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord.

#### CHAP. VIII.

**JESUS** went unto the mount of Olives. 2 And early in the morning, he came again into the

temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of a most excellent sermon, which our Saviour preached in the temple, at the feast of tabernacles. Now the feast being ended, Jesus did not tarry in the city all night; but went out of it two miles, as he frequently used to do, to the mount of Olives. And although it was so dangerous for him to be seen any more in Jerusalem, yet early the next morning he returns again to the city, enters the temple, and falls upon his work of preaching, without fear, and with indefatigable diligence. O what a busy, useful life was this of our Saviour's! He spent the day in preaching in the temple, the night in privacy and prayer on the mount of Olives; and the next morning he returns to his work of preaching again. Thus was he always holily and painfully employed. To glorify his Father, and to be useful and beneficial to mankind, was his food by day, and his rest by night. Lord, how little do we resemble thee, if, when thy life was all pain and labour, ours be all pastime, pleasure, and recreation.

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? 6 This they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not.* 7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. 8 And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 And they which heard it, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had



lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he saith unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Our Saviour early in the morning entering upon the work of preaching; Observe, 1. What a mixed auditory he had, of scribes, and Pharisees, and common people. All sorts of persons came to hear him, but not all with the same intentions. The common people came to learn, but the scribes and Pharisees came to cavil and carp; the latter came to tempt and ensnare him, the former to be taught and instructed by him. It is not our bare attendance upon ordinances, but the purity of our aim, and the sincerity of our intentions, in waiting upon God in them, that is an evidence of our sincerity. Observe, 2. How the hypocrisy of these Pharisees was gilded over with an appearance of sanctity: as if they were great lovers of chastity, and haters of uncleanness, they bring to Christ a woman taken in adultery, to be censured by him. One that had not known these Pharisees, would have concluded them very holy and honest, very conscionable and conscientious persons; but Christ, who saw into their bosoms, soon found that all this was done only to tempt him. Thus a smooth tongue and a false heart often accompany one another: when we see a glittering appearance, we have reason to suspect the inside. Observe, 3. The punishment which the Pharisees sought to have inflicted on this adulteress: it is death: Let her be stoned. Sometimes the punishment of adultery was burning, sometimes stoning, always death. Lord! how ought christians to blush, who have slight thoughts of the sin of adultery, which both Jews and Pagans held ever deadly! Observe, 4. Their ensnaring question: *Moses commanded such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?* The Pharisees desire no better advantage against Christ, than a contradiction to Moses their lawgiver: it has been an old stratagem to set Moses and Christ at variance; but they are fast friends; they are subordinate one to another, not opposed one against another. Moses brings us to Christ, and Christ to glory; fain would these collaguating adversaries draw Christ to contradict Moses, that they might take ad-

vantage of the contradiction to condemn Christ. Observe, 5. The wisdom and caution of our Lord's answer: he doth not excuse her crime, but bids her accusers look at home, and examine their own consciences, whether they were not guilty of the like, or as great a sin. He doth not say, "Let her be stoned;" this had been against the course of his mercy: he doth not say, "Let her not be stoned;" this had been against the law of Moses; but he so answers, that both his justice and his mercy are entire; she dismissed, and they ashamed. It is a false zeal that is eagle-eyed abroad, and blind at home. Such as are most wicked themselves, are oft-times most ready and skilful to spy out the faults and failings of others: we stand too near ourselves to discern our own miscarriages. The eye that sees every thing, sees not itself. Observe, 6. Though Christ abhorred the sin, yet he does not condemn the sinner. *Hath no man condemned thee? neither do I condemn thee*, says Christ. This Christ said, not to excuse the woman, or to connive at her offence; but to show that he declined the office of a civil judge, which was to pass sentence on criminals. He therefore doth not say, No man ought to condemn thee, but, *Hath no man condemned thee?* Christ doth not execute the office of a magistrate in judging her to death; but of a minister, in calling her to repentance and reformation. How ought every one of us to keep within the bounds of our calling, when our Saviour himself will not intrench upon the office and functions of others! Observe lastly, Our Saviour's cautionary direction to this adulteress: *Go, and sin no more*. Where note, Christ doth not say, *Go, and commit adultery no more*; but, *Go, and sin no more*. It is not a partial repentance, or a turning away from this or that particular sin, which will denominate us true penitents, or entitle us to the pardoning mercy of God, but a leaving off all sin of what kind soever; therefore says Christ, *Go, and sin no more*.

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. 13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. 14 Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record

of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. 15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. 16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. 17 It is also written in your law, That the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am one that bare witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. 19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. 20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

Our blessed Saviour having baffled the design which the Pharisees had upon him, and showed a spirit of divine wisdom, in delivering himself from that snare which they had laid for him, he returns to instruct the people in the treasury. And here note, 1. He instructs them in the nature of his office, which was to enlighten all men with the knowledge of divine truth; so that they should not walk in darkness, either of sin or error, but be led to eternal life. Learn hence, That the great end and errand of Christ's coming into the world, was to give light unto poor souls that sat in darkness. Observe, 2. The exception which the Pharisees made against our Saviour's testimony of himself: *Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true.* Indeed, such is the corrupt nature of man, which is prone to seek itself, and bunt after vain-glory, that it may render a person's testimony of himself suspected; but Christ being true God, that cannot lie, and coming out of the bosom of his Father, as his ambassador, his testimony of himself is above all exception, and ought to be credited without farther proof. Observe, 3. How Christ challenges his enemies the Pharisees for judging carnally of him, and according to the meanness of his outward appearance, whereas he judged no man; that is, 1st, No man, as they judged, according to outward show. Or, 2dly, I

judge no man; that is, at present. My proper work is not to condemn any, but to teach all; and my present office is that of a prophet, not of a judge. My coming now is to instruct and save the world; my next coming will be to judge and condemn it. Observe, 4. Christ declares that he is not alone in the testimony given of himself, but that the Father did also testify and bear witness of him, and that according to their own law, the testimony of two was always accounted and esteemed valid. "Now," says Christ, if so much weight be to be laid upon the testimony of two men, how much more forcible should the testimony of the Father, and of him whom the Father hath sent, be, to satisfy you, that what I say of myself is true?" Learn hence, 1. That the Father and the Son, though one in essence and operation, yet are distinct persons. 2. That these distinct persons did bear joint witness concerning Christ, God the Father testified of him by a voice from heaven; and Christ, as God, bare witness of himself as Man, and as Mediator. Surely out of the mouth of two such witnesses, the truth of Christ's divine mission is sufficiently established.

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. 22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. 23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I said therefore unto you, That ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.

Observe here, A dreadful threatening denounced by Christ against the obstinate and unbelieving Jews, *Ye shall die in your sins*; that is, in the guilt of your sins, under the power, and undergoing the punishment, of your sins. Lord, what a sad word is this, *Ye shall die in your sins*! O better is it a thousand times to die in a ditch; for they that die in their sins, shall rise in their sins, and stand before Christ in their sins: such as lie down in sin in the grave, shall have sin lie down with them in hell to all eternity. The sins of believers go to the grave before them, sin dieth

while they live : but the sins of unbelievers go to the grave with them. While they live they are dead in sin ; and by sin they fall into death ; from which there is no recovery unto life. Observe, 2. The grand sin for which this great punishment is threatened ; and that is, the sin of unbelief : *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* Plainly intimating, that, of all sin, infidelity or unbelief is the grand damning sin under the gospel. The devil hath as great an advantage upon men, by making them strong in unbelief, as God hath by making his people strong in faith. Unbelief renders a sinner's case desperate and incurable ; it doth not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it.

25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? And Jesus saith unto them, *Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.* 26 I have many things to say, and to judge of you : but he that sent me is true ; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. 27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. 28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself ; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

The Jews hearing our Saviour's denouncing such a terrible threatening against them, because they believed not on him, in the foregoing verses ; here they perversely ask him, Who he was ? Our Saviour replies, That he was the same that he was from the beginning, even the very Christ, and that they were the very same that they were also, the mortal enemies and opposers of the truth. But that the time was hastening, when they should be fully convinced who he was ; namely, when they had lifted him up upon his cross, when he was risen again, and ascended into heaven, and brought that destruction upon them which he had so often threatened. Learn hence, That the sufferings of Christ were clear and convincing demonstrations, both who he was, and what he was. The darkening of the sun, the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks, the opening of the graves, were such convincing proofs of his deity,

that they could not but say, *Verily this was the Son of God.*

29 And he that sent me is with me : the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always those things that please him.

That is, He that sent and commissioned me for the great work of redemption, he is continually with me, both to assist and to accept me, I doing every thing that is agreeable to his holy will and pleasure. Hence learn, 1. That the work of redemption, in the hands of Jesus Christ, was a work well pleasing to God the Father ; the work itself was highly pleasing to him ; and Christ's way of managing it was well-pleasing also. 2. That the reason why it was thus well-pleasing to God, was, because he acted in a constant conformity to his Father's will, kept to his Father's commission, and executed his Father's commands, *doing always those things that pleased him.* Learn, 3. That as the Father and Christ were inseparable in respect of the unity of the divine essence ; so the Father was always with Christ as Mediator, both to support and to uphold him, to accept and to reward him. The Father hath not left me alone, either in the doing of his will, or in the suffering of his pleasure. Learn, 4. That those who desire the gracious and special presence of God with them in all conditions, particularly in times of sufferings and trouble, they must make it their care and study to please God, and to observe his will in all things ; then God will be with them in his guiding presence, in his strengthening presence ; in his comforting, in his quickening, in his sanctifying, sympathizing, and accepting presence.

30 As he spake these words, many believed on him. 31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed : 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Observe here, 1. The blessed fruit and success of our Saviour's foregoing discourse concerning his person and office. *As he spake these words, many believed on him :* not by their own natural power and ability, but by Christ's omnipotent and efficacious grace : he that spake to the ear, caused his word to reach the heart ; Christ himself

that planted and watered, gave also the increase. Observe, 2. The love and care of Christ mentioned to these new converts; he watereth immediately these plants with wholesome advice and counsel: *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.* Where note, It must be Christ's word, the true doctrine of the gospel, and this abided and continued in, which will evidence our discipleship. Observe, 3. A special privilege which shall follow upon abiding in the doctrine of Christ: they shall increase in the knowledge of it, and be made free by it. *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* Where note, That man is naturally in bondage and captivity, by blindness of mind, by hardness of heart, by rebellion of will. 2. That the means appointed by God for setting him at liberty from this captivity and bondage, is the word of Christ, and the doctrine of the gospel. *The truth shall make you free.*

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Observe here, How these carnal Jews understand all that our Saviour said, to be spoken in and after a carnal manner: when he spake to them before, of *eating his flesh, and drinking his blood*, they understand it grossly of his natural body. When he speaks to them here of a spiritual freedom from sin, they understand it of a civil freedom from servile bondage and subjection; alleging they were Abraham's seed, and never in bondage to any man. This was a manifest untruth, having been in bondage, in their ancestors, to the Egyptians and Babylonians; and, in their own persons, to the Romans. But this was not the bondage that Christ meant; but a spiritual slavery and thralldom under the dominion of sin, and power of Satan: *For he that committeth sin, is the servant of sin:* that is, whosoever doth habitually, wilfully, deliberately, and constantly, allow and

tolerate himself in a sinful course, he is under the servitude and thralldom of sin. Every sinner is a bond-slave; and to live in sin, is to live in slavery. And this every man doth till the Son makes him free; then, and not till then, *is he free indeed.* Learn hence, That interest in Christ, and continuance in his doctrine, sets the soul at liberty from all that bondage whereunto it was subject in its natural and sinful state. O happy exchange, from being the devil's slave, to become Christ's freeman; and also freed from the rigorous exactions and terrible maledictions of the law.

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed: but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. 38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

The Jews boasting again that they were Abraham's seed, and bearing themselves much upon it, our Saviour tells them, he knew they were so, his natural children according to the flesh; but not his genuine children according to the spirit. This he proves, because they did not tread in Abraham's steps, and do his works; for if either the temper of their minds, or the actions of their lives, were agreeable to Abraham, they would not seek, as they did, to destroy and kill him, only for bringing the doctrine of salvation to them, which he had heard and learned of the Father. Thence learn, 1. How prone we are to glory in our outward privileges, and to rely upon them. Whereas these are arguments of God's goodness towards us, but no evidence of our goodness towards him. 2. That it is very dangerous and unsafe to pride ourselves in, and depend upon, any external privileges and prerogatives whatsoever; as our being born within the pale of the visible church, or descending from pious parents and holy progenitors: for unless we be followers of their faith, admirers of their piety, and imitate

their example, we are none of their children ; but belong to another father, as our Saviour tells the Jews in the other verses.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication ; we have one Father, *even* God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me ; for I proceeded forth and came from God ; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech ? *even* because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own ; for he is a liar, and the father of it.

In the former verses the Jews made their boast that they were the children of Abraham ; in these, that they are the children of God. *We have one Father, even God.* This our Saviour disproves, telling them, that if God were their Father, they would love him, as proceeding from him by eternal generation, and in his office employed by him as Mediator. Also, if God were their Father, they would understand him speaking from God ; whereas now they were so transported with malice that they could not endure his doctrine with patience, though it came from God. All which were undeniable proofs, that they were not the children of God. Hence learn, That none can justly pretend any interest in God as his children, but they that love Christ, as being the express image of his Father's person, and do hear and receive his doctrine, as coming from God. This the Jews did not do ; therefore, says Christ, they are not the children of God. Observe farther, Having told them whose children they are not, our Saviour tells them plainly whose children they were : *Ye are of your Father the devil.* This appears by their being acted by him, by their resembling and imitating of him, their inclinations, dispositions, and actions, being all to fulfil the lusts of the devil. Now, as his servants we are whom we obey ; so his children we are, whom we resemble. Learn hence, That men's sinful practices will prove them to be Satan's children, let their profession

be what it will ; if in the temper of their minds, and in the actions of their lives, there be a conformity to Satan's disposition, and a ready compliance with his temptations, they are certainly his children, what pretensions soever they make of being the children of God. None could pretend higher to the relation of God's children than these Jews did ; yet says Christ, *Ye are the children of the devil, for his works ye do.* Note hence, That the devil hath the relation of a father to all wicked men ; and this fatherhood did not proceed from the act of the father, but of the children ; for the devil doth not make wicked men his children by begetting them, but they make the devil their father by imitating of him.

45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin ? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me ? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words : ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God. 48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ? 49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil ; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. 50 And I seek not mine own glory ; there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

Here observe, 1. The free reproof which Christ gave the Jews for their obstinate unbelief ; *Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.* 2. The challenge which he gives the worst of his adversaries : *Which of you convinceth me of sin ?* So perfectly pure, innocent, and spotless, was the doctrine and life of Christ, that although his enemies loaded him with slander and false accusation, yet none of them could justly convict him of, much less condemn him for, the least known sin. Observe, 3. The Jews being enraged at this free reproof, fell a railing at his person, charging him with being a Samaritan, possessed with an evil spirit. Our Saviour meekly replies, That he did not deal with the devil ; but was honouring his Father in what he did and said ; and therefore his Father would take care of his honour, and judge between him and them. Here note, That though Christ used some sharpness in reproving the Jews, and representing them to themselves ; yet he answers with wonderful mildness and

meekness, when he discovers his resentment of his own reproaches. How cool was Christ in his own cause; but warm enough in God's!

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. 52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. 53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? 54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honour-eth me, of whom ye say, that he is your God: 55 Yet ye have not known him: but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

Observe here, 1. The blessed fruit and effect of observing our Saviour's doctrine: *He that keeps my saying shall never see death*; that is, shall be secured from eternal misery, and enjoy eternal life. Observe, 2. How the Jews misunderstood our Saviour's words, *He that keeps my saying shall never see death*, as if he meant a freedom from temporal death; and hereupon they looked upon him as beside himself, to promise a privilege which neither Abraham nor the prophets did ever enjoy. Whereas it was not exemption from temporal death, but freedom from eternal destruction, which our Saviour promised to them that keep his saying. Hence learn, That the misunderstanding of Christ's doctrine, and taking it in a carnal sense, has given occasion for the many cavils and objections made against it. Observe, 3. How Christ clears himself of all ambition in this matter, and shows that he did not make this promise of delivering his followers from death vain-gloriously, but that God whom they called their Father, had honoured him with power to make good whatever he had promised to them that keep his saying. Learn hence, That as Christ entirely sought his Father's glory, so the Father conferred an honour and glory upon Christ as Mediator; thereby testifying, how infinitely

pleased he was with the redemption of mankind performed by him. *If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me.*

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

That is, "Abraham having received a promise, that the Messiah should come of his seed, he exceedingly rejoiced to see the day of my coming in the flesh, though afar off, with the eye of his faith, and in a figure, in his sacrificed son Isaac; and this sight of his faith was so transporting, that he leaped for joy." Learn hence, That a strong faith gives such a clear sight of Christ (though at a distance) as produceth an holy delight and rejoicing in him.

57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. 59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Observe here, 1. What a false and ridiculous construction the Jews make of our Saviour's words, as if he had affirmed that he had seen Abraham, and Abraham him, with bodily eyes; whereas Christ only asserted, that Abraham had seen his day; that is, he foresaw by faith the day of his incarnation, and coming in the flesh. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's positive assertion of his divinity, or that he had a being as God from all eternity; for, says he, *Before Abraham was, I am*. Where note, That Christ does not say, *Before Abraham was, I was*, but, *Before Abraham was, I am*; which is the proper name of God; whereby is signified the eternal duration and permanency of his being. The adversaries of Christ's divinity say, that, before Abraham was, Christ was; that is, in God's foreknowledge or decree; but this may be said of any other person, as well as Christ, that he was in the foreknowledge of God before Abraham was born. Whereas undoubtedly it was Christ's design in these words to give himself some preference and advantage above Abraham, which this interpretation

doth not in the least do. Observe, lastly, How the Jews looking upon Christ as a blasphemer, for making himself equal with God, and for asserting his eternal existence, they make a furious attempt upon his life, by taking up stones to cast at him, as the Jews used to deal with blasphemers; but our Saviour delivers himself miraculously from their fury, and escapes untouched. Hence learn, That when arguments fail, the enemies of truth betake themselves to force and violence: *They took up stones to cast at him.* 2. That as Christ disappointed his own persecutors, so he can and will deliver his people in their greatest extremity from their persecutors' rage and fury, 2 Pet. ii. 9. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished.*

### CHAP. IX.

**A**ND as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

The foregoing chapter acquainted us with a famous encounter which the Pharisees had with our blessed Saviour in the temple at Jerusalem; this being ended, as he passed from the temple, he saw a man lying, possibly by the highway, who was born blind; him Christ pitches upon as an object fit to exercise his divine power, in the cure and healing of. They that are blind by casualty, may perhaps be relieved by art and industry; but to cure one that is born blind, nothing less is required than an almighty power. Learn hence, That diseases and distempers, which are incurable by the ordinary course of nature, are not insuperable to Christ's power, nor impossible for him to help, but a proper object for him to magnify his power upon. Therefore it is here recorded, that this poor man was blind from his birth; such blindness being accounted incurable by natural means.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

Here observe, Something implied or supposed; namely, 1. That all bodily afflictions and calamities do come upon us for sin; whereas afflictions, although they always fall upon a sinner, yet they are not al-

ways sent to punish sin, but by way of purgation and prevention of sin. 2. It is here supposed, that as some afflictions come upon men for personal sins, so others come upon them for parental sins, and that children may, and oft-times do, very justly suffer for their parents' sins. 3. It is here supposed, that there is no other reason of a person's sufferings, but only sin; whereas though sin be much and often the cause of suffering, yet we may wrong God and man, yea, and sin too, to conclude it is always the cause of suffering. 4. It is implied here, that there is a transmigration of souls from one body to another; the disciples supposed, that this soul, when it was in another body, sinned, and was now punished by being put into a blind body. This *Pythagorean* error was crept in among the Pharisees, and the disciples here seemed to be tainted and infected with it. This may teach us, how far the holiest and wisest of men are from an infallible spirit, and that the best of men may be misled by a common error.

3 *Jesus* answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Christ's answer must not be understood absolutely, as if he denied this man and his parents to be guilty of sin, for both he and they had sin enough, not only to deserve temporal blindness, but eternal darkness. The meaning is, that in afflicting this man, the Lord did not so much respect his or his parents' sin, as the manifestation of his own glory in this miraculous cure. Christ doth not deny but that a man's own sin, and the sin of his parents, may be the procuring cause of blindness; but that neither the one nor the other was the cause in that man's case: but that the power and mercy of God might be seen in restoring this man to his sight, therefore was he born blind. Whence note, 1. That though sin be always the deserving, yet it is not always the procuring cause of affliction. 2. That we seldom think of, or hit upon any other cause of affliction, but only sin: though the design of God looks beyond the sin of man in afflictions, yet man seldom looks beyond that, or thinks of any other design of God in afflicting, but only punishing for sin.

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can

work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Here our Saviour tells his-disciples, That he was sent by God into the world, and had a great work assigned him by God, during his abode in it; namely, to instruct, reform, and save mankind; and what our Saviour says of himself, is applicable to every one of us in the lower sense: we are sent into the world to work out our own salvation in the first place, and then to promote the salvation of others as much as in us lies. Note, 1. That every one has a work to do in the world, a great work assigned him by God that sent him into it. 2. That the time allotted for the finishing and despatching of this great work, is a short season: *While it is day*. 3. That after the working season is past and expired, there will succeed a night of darkness, in which there must be a cessation from work: *The night cometh*.

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, 7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is, by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

Two things concurred towards the cure of this blind man, namely, an act of divine power on Christ's part, and an act of faith and obedience on the man's part. 1. An act of divine power on Christ's part: he tempers clay and spittle together, and anoints the man's eyes therewith, and behold he sees. What an improbable remedy and means was this to human reason! much fitter to put out a seeing man's eyes than to cure a blind man's. Had Christ pulled out his box, and applied some medicinal ointment to his eyes, then the praise had been ascribed to his skill, not to his power; but now it plainly appeared that all the virtue was in Christ, not in the means. Lord! what great things canst thou do by weak and unlikely means; yea, by opposite and contrary means! but it is the praise of omnipotence to work by improbabilities. From the contemptibleness of the means or instrument, always redounds the greater honour to the agent. Observe, 2. An act of faith and obedience on the man's part: *He went away, and*

*washed his eyes in the pool of Siloam, and returned seeing*. Where note, How Christ delights to exercise and try the faith of his people, by their subjection and obedience to difficult commands. 2. That true faith, joined with sincere obedience, never faileth the expectations of them that exercise it; especially in obeying the most hard and difficult commands. Therefore the evangelist added, that the blind man after washing returned seeing.

8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? 9 Some said, This is he; others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. 10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? 11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. 12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

The blind man, thus miraculously cured, returns with much joy to his neighbours and acquaintance, who confer with him about this matter: they enquire, whether he was the person cured or not? who was the person that cured him? and where that person was? He assures them, he was the very person that was blind, but now cured; and he that cured him was Jesus; that the means used were clay and spittle; but where the person was, or what was become of him, he knew not. Learn thence, 1. That the miraculous cures of God work a sensible alteration in men, not only in their own apprehension, but in the judgments of others. This miracle shined forth among the neighbours, who, having seen and observed the blind man, admire his healing. Learn, 2. How frankly the blind man acknowledges, and how freely he confesses, that he was the person whom Jesus had healed: *I am he*. It is an unthankful silence to smother the works of God in affected secrecy; to make God a loser by his bounty towards us, in a shameful injustice. - O God! we are not worthy of thy common favours, much less of spiritual blessings, if we do not publish thy mercies



on the house-top, and praise thee for them in the great congregation.

13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. 14 And it was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. 16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

Observe here, 1. How the Jews, who should have been full of silent wonder, and inclined to believe in Jesus Christ, so omnipotent an agent, are prejudiced against him, and bring the late blind man before the Pharisees, our Saviour's professed enemies. Observe, 2. The time which our Saviour chose for working this cure: it was on the sabbath. Many, if not most of Christ's famous miracles, were wrought upon the sabbath-day. Upon that day he cured the withered hand, *Matt. xii.* Upon that day he cured the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, *John v.* Upon that day he cured the blind man here. This Christ did probably for two reasons: 1. To confirm his doctrine which he preached on that day, by miracles; therefore his preaching and working miracles went together. 2. To instruct the Jews (had they been willing to receive instruction) in the true doctrine and proper duties of their sabbath, and to let them know, that works of necessity and mercy are very consistent with the due sanctification of the sabbath. It is hard to find out any time wherein charity is unseasonable; for as it is the best of graces, so the works of it are fittest for the best of days.

17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. 18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his

sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? 20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: 21 But by what means he now seeth we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. 22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

Observe here, 1. How desirous the Pharisees were to obscure the glory of this famous miracle which Christ had wrought: in order to which, 1. They re-examine the man, to know what his thoughts were of the person who had done this for him: they judged him to be an impostor, and a great sinner; the man declares freely that he believed him to be a great prophet. Hence we learn, That there may be, and sometimes is, more true knowledge of Jesus Christ in one poor man, than in a general council of learned rabbies. This blind man saw Christ to be a prophet, when the Jewish sanhedrim saw nothing in him but imposture. *This man is not of God,* says the council: *Verily, he is a prophet,* says the blind man. 2. They next examine his parents, (being unwilling to believe the man himself,) Whether he was their son, or not? If so, whether he was born blind? And if born blind, by what means he now sees? Lord! what obstinate and wilful blindness was found in these Pharisees! How do they close their eyes and say, We will not see! What endeavours are here used to smother a miracle, which undeniably proved Christ to be the expected Messias! They examine first the man, then his parents, then the man again; hoping, that being overawed with fear, they would either deny or at least conceal the truth; but the more they strove to darken and obscure the truth, the more conspicuous and evident they made it. *Great is truth, and will prevail,* how many soever oppose it, and set themselves against it. Observe next, The wisdom and cautiousness of his parents'

answer : they expressly own, that the blind man was their son ; that he was born blind ; but for the way of his cure, they wave that, possibly because they did not see this cure wrought, and fearing the sentence of excommunication, a decree being passed among the rulers, That *whoso confesseth Christ shall be put out of the synagogue*. Hence learn, 1. That excommunication, or separation from the society of the people of God, is an ancient and honourable ordinance in the church of God, and as such to be revered and esteemed. 2. That this ordinance of God has been and may be abused by wicked men, and the edge of it turned against Christ himself, and his sincerest members. 3. That the fear of unjust excommunication must not discourage persons from confessing the truth, when called to it. The parents of the blind man durst not confess Christ, for fear that they should be put out of the synagogues.

24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise : we know that this man is a sinner. 25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not : one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. 26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee ? how opened he thine eyes ? 27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear it again ? will ye also be his disciples ? 28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. 29 We know that God spake unto Moses : as for this fellow, we know not whence he is.

Here we have an account of the Pharisees farther practising upon this blind man, to rob Christ of the glory of this miracle ; first they insinuate with him, and then they frown upon him. First they insinuate with him, saying, Give God the praise. As if they had said, Ascribe the cure to God, not to this man ; whom they conclude to be a sinner, because he broke (as they thought) the sabbath. It is no new thing to see men pretend to aim at the glory of God, when at the same time they are maliciously

opposing Christ, and persecuting his members. Next, they attempted to frown this poor man into a denial of this miracle wrought upon him, or to persuade the people that it was a cheat : but it is wonderful to observe how the boldness and confidence of this poor man increased, God giving him that wisdom and courage which all his adversaries were not able to resist or gainsay. Therefore the Pharisees being angry at this boldness of the man, they revile him for being so silly as to become a disciple of Christ, whose office and authority they knew not ; whereas they were the disciples of Moses, whom they knew God spake unto. Learn hence, That such as are led by malice, and prepossessed with prejudice against Christ, will not only think basely of his person, but refuse to see the clearest evidences of his authority and commission. As for this fellow, say the malicious Pharisees, we know not whence he is, or who gave him this commission.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. 31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners : but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. 32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. 33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

In these verses the blind man proceeds to vindicate our blessed Saviour, who had cured him of his blindness, from the exceptions of the Pharisees, and endeavours by solid arguments to convince them, that his cure (being born blind) was truly miraculous ; and consequently proved Christ to be of God. 1. The man admires that Christ having wrought such a miracle upon him, they should be ignorant of his authority. *This is marvellous, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.* He lays down a general proposition, that no deceiver or false teacher is heard of God, or enabled by him to work such miracles as these, but only such faithful servants as do his will are thus extraordinarily assisted by him. *We know that God heareth not sinners ; that is, such*

as love and delight in sin, such as are in a state of sin, and go on in a course of sin, God will not hear such, or answer the prayers of such. Indeed God sometimes hears a sinner's prayer in wrath, and refuses to hear a saint's prayer in mercy; but he never denies a saint's prayer in wrath or hears a sinner's prayer in mercy. The proposition laid down is an eternal truth: *God heareth not sinners*; that is, so long as they purpose to continue sinners, and to go on in a course of sin, and to remain bold and presumptuous sinners. Learn thence, That none that live in a course of sin, can reasonably expect that God should hear them, and give in an answer of prayer to them. *God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth*; that is, if a man feareth God, and worketh righteousness, him the Lord accepteth, heareth, and answereth. Learn hence, That such as would be heard of God, and accepted with him, must be devout worshippers of him. 2. That is not enough to prove men religious and acceptable with God, that they are devout worshippers of him, unless they walk in obedience to him, and do his will. *If any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth*. Observe, 3. How the blind man goes on to prove that Christ had a special authority from God, and an extraordinary presence of God with him in what he did, because he had done such a work as was never done by Moses, or by any of the prophets, or by any person whatsoever, since the creation of the world. From whence he wisely and well infers, that Christ was a person authorized by and sent of God. Learn hence, 1. That Christ having done that which was never done before, (namely, to give sight to one that was born blind,) was an evidence of his omnipotence. 2. That this act of omnipotence proved him to be God. Whatever miracles the prophets wrought, they wrought them by Christ's power; but Christ wrought this and all other miracles by his own power. Observe lastly, How this blind man, though unlearned, judges more rightly of divine things than the whole learned council of the Sanhedrim. Whence we learn, That we are not always to be led by the authority of councils, popes, or bishops; and that it is not absurd for laymen sometimes to vary from their opinions. These overseers being sometimes guilty of great oversights. *Dr. Whitby.*

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? and they cast him out. 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out: and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? 36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? 37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. 38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Observe here, 1. A special instance of pharisaical pride; they account this poor man a vile person, whom heaven had marked by his native blindness for some extraordinary wickedness. How prone are we to judge them the greatest sinners, whom we observe to be the greatest sufferers. Observe, 2. From reviling they proceed to excommunicating; *They cast him out*: that is, out of the communion of the Jewish church. O happy man! who, having lost a synagogue, has found heaven! Behold this blind man, and admire him for a resolute confessor, stoutly defending the gracious author of his cure, against the cavils of the Pharisees, and maintaining the innocence and honour of so blessed a benefactor. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's regard to this blind man, whom the Pharisees had set at nought and excommunicated: *He finds him out*, reveals himself more fully to him, and directs him to believe in him. Where observe, That the miracle which Christ had wrought upon the blind man, did not convert him, and work faith in him, till Christ revealed himself unto him, and enabled him to discern the truth of what he revealed. Learn hence, That miracles confirm faith, but miracles alone cannot work faith. The blind man had experienced a miracle wrought upon him, yet remains an unbeliever, till Christ said, *I am he*. Observe, 4. How readily the man receives the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, upon the forementioned revelation of himself unto him: he instantly said, *Lord, I believe*: and, in testimony thereof, *worships himself*: that is, as God incarnate, as God manifested in the flesh. Thence learn, That true knowledge of the Son of God will beget faith in him; and true faith in him will be productive of

homage and adoration, of obedience and subjection to him. He that knows Christ aright, will believe; and he that believes, will worship and obey: *He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.

In these words our Saviour declares not the intentional design, but the accidental event of his coming into the world: namely, 1. That those who were blind might receive sight. 2. That those who presume they see, and know more than others; for despising the gospel, and shutting their eyes against the light of it, should be left in darkness, and by the just judgment of God be more and more blinded. Those that shut their eyes wilfully against the clearest light, and say they will not see, it is just with God to close their eyes judicially, and say they shall not see.

40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? 41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Observe here, 1. How the Pharisees, who watched all opportunities to ensnare our Saviour, look upon these last words as reflecting upon them: as if Christ did insinuate that they were blind. *Are we blind also?* They that shut their eyes, and will not see the light which Christ offers to them, are the worst of blind ones. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's reply to the Pharisees' question, *If ye were blind*; that is, simply ignorant of your duty, and without the means of knowledge and instruction, *you should have no sin*; that is, comparatively to what you have; you now should not have had so much sin and guilt upon you as now you have, by shutting your eyes against the light. *But now ye say, we see*; that is, being puffed up with the knowledge which you have, as if ye were the only men that saw, this proud conceit of yours renders your condition incurable, and *your sin remaineth unpardonable*. Learn hence, 1. That it is a far greater sin to condemn the known laws of

God, than to be ignorant of them; pride is a greater hinderance of knowledge than ignorance, because the proud man thinks he wants no knowledge. 2. That the most exalted knowledge is insufficient to salvation, without a suitable and correspondent practice. The Pharisees had the key of knowledge at their girdle, yet our Saviour tells them of double damnation. Lord! how sad is it so to know Christ in this world, as that he will be ashamed to know us in another world!

## CHAP. X.

VERILY, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. 6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

Our blessed Saviour having in the end of the foregoing chapter upbraided the Pharisees for their blindness and ignorance in the mysteries of religion, notwithstanding the high conceit which they had of their own knowledge, he proceeds in this chapter farther to convince them, that they were blind leaders of the blind, tho' they thought and looked upon themselves as the only guides and teachers of the people. And in order thereunto, he propounds a parable of the true and false shepherd, which represents a good and bad pastor and teacher, and gives us a fourfold mark and character of a good shepherd. Observe, 1. The good shepherd enters in by the door, that is, he has his vocation and mission from Christ: he comes into the church regularly, in a right and approved way and manner; not by any clandestine methods, or indirect means. To him the porter openeth; that

is, the Holy Spirit, who openeth the hearts of men to receive Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the gospel, which the faithful shepherds deliver in his name, and by authority received from him. Learn hence, That all faithful pastors have a lawful call to the work of the ministry: they enter by a right door, and execute their trust in a right manner; but such as, without a call from God, unwarrantably thrust themselves into the ministry, are no better, nor no other, *than thieves and robbers*, in God's account. Observe, 2. Another property of a good shepherd is this, *That he calleth his sheep by their names*. This importeth three things: 1. A special love that he bears to them. 2. A special care that he has over them. 3. A particular acquaintance with them, that he may know how to apply himself suitably to them; which though it be eminently verified in Christ, yet it is the duty of every faithful pastor and under shepherd, in his measure, to labour after. Observe, 3. *The good shepherd leadeth out his sheep into good pastures*: that is, he feedeth them with sound doctrine, nourishes them with the word of life. Whereas the hireling or false shepherd, whatever he may do for his own sake, he has no regard to Jesus Christ, to the honour of his person, to the edification of his church, or the salvation of souls; but his design is to raise and enrich himself, and so he may compass that, he cares not how many souls perish through his neglect. Observe, 4. The last property of the good shepherd, here mentioned, is this, *That he goeth before his sheep*, as the shepherd doth before his flock; namely, by a holy life and unblameable conversation: he treads out those steps before the people, which they take in their way towards heaven: *And the sheep follow him*, and are guided by him: *He leadeth out his sheep, and goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice*.

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that

they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Observe here, 1. The character which Christ gives of himself, *I am the door of the sheep*; that is, the only way and means by which sinners have access to God, and can obtain salvation; the only door by which sinners are entered into the kingdom of grace, and admitted into the kingdom of glory. Learn hence, That there is no possible way of access to God for fallen man, but by Jesus Christ. As there is no way of entering the house but by the door, and those that so enter are safe; in like manner, such as come unto God through Jesus Christ, in the way of faith and holy obedience, shall be put in a secure condition, and at last obtain eternal salvation. Observe, 2. The end and design of Christ in coming into the world, asserted and declared by himself; *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*. But had not his people spiritual life before he came into the world? Yes, he gave life to his people before his coming, in a measure sufficient to supply their necessity; but since his coming, he gives it in such a superabounding measure, as may testify his divine bounty; they shall not barely live, but live *abundantly*: that is, their spiritual life shall abound through the upholding, strengthening, quickening, and comforting presence of his Holy Spirit; for having conveyed spiritual life unto his people, in their regeneration and conversion, he will cause it to increase more and more in their sanctification, until it arrive to a complete perfection in their glorification. Observe lastly, The character which our Saviour gives of the scribes and Pharisees in general, and of those false Christs and false prophets which went before him, in particular; he styles them *thieves and robbers*; *All that ever came before me were thieves and robbers*. Observe, He doth not say, all that were sent before me, but *all that came before me*, were thieves and robbers. So that Christ doth not speak this of the true prophets, who were sent by God before him, but of the false Christs, and false prophets, that came of themselves without any commission from God. The meaning is, all persons that came before me, pretending to be what I am, the true Messiah, as did Theudas and Judas of Galilee, &c. they were thieves and robbers; that is, they only sought their own advantage, while they deceived and

ruined you. Learn hence, That whoever took upon them the office and person of the Messias before Christ, or whosoever have since usurped a lawful calling in his church without his commission, they are in Christ's account no better than murderers, thieves, and robbers, and they ought to be so in the people's esteem. *The sheep did not hear them.*

11 I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth : and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down my life for the sheep.

In these verses our Saviour evidently proves himself to be the true Shepherd of his church, by the marks and signs, by the properties and characters, of a good shepherd ; which were eminently found with him, namely, to know all his flock, to take care of them, and to lay down his life for them. 1. Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of his church, hath an exact and distinct knowledge of his flock : *I know my sheep*, with a threefold knowledge, and with a knowledge of intelligence and observation ; he knows them so as to observe and take notice of them, with a knowledge of approbation and acceptation ; knows them so as to approve and own them, with a knowledge of care and protection ; he knows them so as to defend and keep them. Thus Christ knows his sheep, *and is also known of them* ; that is, he is believed on, beloved, and obeyed, by them. 2 *He lays down his life for his flock* ; and for this doth he eminently deserve the title of the good Shepherd. (As, for his power, he is styled the great Shepherd.) A good Shepherd indeed, who not only gives life for his sheep, but gives his own life by way of ransom for his sheep ! The example of Christ, the great and good Shepherd, in laying down his life for his sheep, teacheth all subordinate and inferior shepherds, to

prefer the good of their flock even before their own lives.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold, *and one shepherd.*

Here Christ proves himself to be the true Shepherd of his church from another property of a good shepherd, which is, to take care for increasing and enlarging his fold, by bringing in the Gentiles to it ; and by breaking down the partition wall, to make one church both of Jews and Gentiles. Christ calls the *Gentiles* his *other sheep*, by way of anticipation, because shortly they were to be so, and united together with the believing Jews into one sheep-fold ; and whereas he says, he *must* bring these sheep in, we are to understand it not of a necessity of co-action, but of a necessity of compact ; it being a federal agreement betwixt the Father and himself, that both Jew and Gentile should be one flock, inclosed in one fold, and presented to his Father as a glorious church. Hence learn, How endearing our obligations are to the dearest Jesus, that he should account us Gentiles, who were afar off, his *sheep*, (we being so in respect of his eternal purpose,) and make it his care, and esteem it his charge, to call us home, and bring us into his fold the church, that we might be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites. *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring.*

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself ; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Hence note, 1. That Jesus Christ certainly foreknew his own death and resurrection. 2. That Christ was a volunteer in dying, *he laid down his life* ; none should have taken it from him. 'Tis true, his death was a violent death, but a voluntary sacrifice ; he died violently, but yet voluntarily : the hand of his enemies could never hurt him without his own consent. 3. That

as Christ died voluntarily with respect to himself, so in a way of subjection to his Father's command. *This commandment have I received from my Father.* 4. That this voluntary submission of Christ to die for us, was the ground of his Father's love to him. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.* Although the Father had many reasons to love the Son, yet none was stronger than this obedience of his to death, even the cursed death of the cross, for the redemption and salvation of lost sinners; therefore did the Father love him with a more exceeding love, because he laid down his life for his sheep.

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. 20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? 21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

Here the evangelist shows what different effects this sermon of our Saviour had upon the Jews: many of them calumniate and slander him, as one possessed and mad, and therefore not to be heard and minded; others of calmer thoughts said, That the doctrine be taught, and the late miracle which he had wrought in curing the blind man, were abundantly sufficient to confute such a groundless slander. Learn hence, That the doctrine of Christ meeting with diversity of dispositions, it is no wonder that it occasions different effects, to the softening of some and hardening of others; even as the same sun that melteth the wax, hardeneth the clay; yet is not this to be imputed to the doctrine of our Saviour, but to men's corruptions which oppose the truth, and the maintainers of it. *There was a division again amongst them.*

22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

This feast was not of divine, but human institution; it was appointed by Judas Maccabeus, and continued eight days, as an anniversary commemoration for the repairing of the temple. Now our Saviour was so far from reproving the Jews for observing this feast, which was of human institution, that he graced the solemnity with

his own presence. Hence observe, That our Saviour held communion with the Jewish church, and did, without scruple, conform himself to the observation of their rites and customs, although they were not originally of divine institution. Learn, 2. That such a christian as doth peaceably comply with the practice of the church in whose communion he lives, in the observation of those different rites and customs which are used by her, acts most agreeable to our Saviour's practice and example. Who can with any show of reason censure christians for observing the feast of the Nativity, who see Christ himself, observing the feast of Dedication? Certainly no person of sober principles ever questioned, but that ecclesiastical rulers and civil magistrates have a power to appoint public days of thanksgiving yearly, for the commemoration of mercies, which ought never to be forgotten. From our Saviour's presence at this feast, Grotius well notes, That festival days, in memorial of public blessings, may piously be instituted by persons in authority, without a divine command.

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

In these verses we have recorded a new and fresh debate betwixt our Saviour and the Jews, and therein we have observable, 1. The time of this debate, verse 22. it was *at the feast of the dedication, in the winter.* Our Saviour taking that opportunity to publish his doctrine, when a concourse of people were gathered together at that solemnity. Observe, 2. The place of this debate, in *Solomon's porch.* Although the temple and porch built by Solomon were destroyed by the Babylonians; yet when the temple was rebuilt, there was a porch like it, which retained the ancient name. Observe, 3. The debate itself: *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* Not that they affected the knowledge of the truth, but only designed to ensnare

him; for if he had affirmed himself to be the Messiah, he had brought himself in danger of the Roman governor; because the Jews expected the Messiah to be a temporal prince, that should deliver them from the Roman power. Now if Christ had declared himself such a Messiah as the Jews expected, it might have cost him his life. Therefore his hour being not yet come, he answers with his usual prudence and wariness to their ensnaring question. Learn hence, That Christ's enemies are full of subtle policies, and can turn themselves into all shapes, that, if possible, they may entrap and ensnare him; and accordingly they pretend here great earnestness of desire to be satisfied, whether he was indeed the true and promised Messiah; when in truth they had another design. Observe, 4. The wisdom and caution of our Saviour's answer: he refers them to his miracles, *The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.* Our Saviour's miraculous works were sufficient for the Jews to have grounded and bottomed their faith upon, and to have confirmed them in the belief, that he was the promised and expected Messiah, had not prejudice, obstinacy, and malice, blinded their eyes, that they could neither see nor consider. Observe, lastly, How Christ points out to these Jews the true cause of their infidelity; which was, not the obscurity of his doctrine, but their not being his sheep; that is, not as yet converted, they not having the properties of his sheep, which he sets down in the following verses. Learn hence, That men's final unbelief under the means of faith, is a clear evidence of their being in a lost and perishing condition. Infidelity is the sin that doth consign a man over to damnation; and to such as sit under the gospel, doth not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it.

27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:*

Here observe, 1. That all sincere and faithful christians are Christ's sheep, and he is their great and good Shepherd. This relation implies tender affection, powerful protection, and plentiful provision. The tenderness of Christ's affection towards his sheep, appears by pitying their infirmities, by having a fellow-feeling with them in their sufferings, by suiting their temptations to the degrees of their graces. His care in providing for them appears, in affording to them the holy scriptures, the ministry of

the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the operations of his Holy Spirit, to make all efficacious and effectual to them. His protection of them discovers itself, by preparing them for trials, by supporting them under them, and by delivering them out of them, and by sanctifying all to them, causing them to work together in subserviency to his own glory, and his people's good. Observe, 2. That Christ's sheep hear Christ's voice, and answer the call of their great Shepherd. They hear the voice of Christ speaking to them in the scriptures, in the ministry of the word, in their own consciences, in providences; and they hear Christ's voice speaking to them in and by his Holy Spirit; and as they hear Christ's voice, so do they answer his call: now the right answer to the call of Christ in the gospel, is a present answer, a willing answer, and an abiding answer. Observe, 3. That all Christ's sheep do follow him their Shepherd. They follow him, 1. In his doctrine: and, 2. In his example; in his contempt of the world, in his freedom in reproving sin, in the holiness and heavenly-mindedness of his conversation, in his meekness and patience, in charity and universal goodness, and as he was a mighty pattern of prayer. Observe, 4. That Christ the great and good Shepherd knows all his sheep: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.* He knows them so as to distinguish them, so as to observe and take notice of them, so as to own and approve them, so as to take care of them, and provide for them. And as the Lord knoweth who are his, so he knoweth who are not his too; as he knows his sheep, so he knows the goats also, and their place will be at his left hand: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.*

28 *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* 29 *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

Observe here, 1. The promise made by Christ unto his sheep, namely, the promise of eternal life, and perseverance in grace, till they come to the full fruition of it in glory: *I give unto them eternal life, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand.* Observe, 2. The confirmation he gives of this from his own and his Father's



power, which is employed, engaged, and concerned for them, and for their perseverance and preservation, notwithstanding all opposition to the contrary: *My Father which gave them me is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* Learn, 1. That eternal life is the portion of Christ's sheep. 2. That eternal life is the gift of Christ. 3. That eternal life is now given to Christ's sheep: they have it now in the purchase, in the promise, and in the first-fruits. 4. That all Christ's sheep are put by God the Father into Christ's hand for security: *My Father hath given them me.* 5. The Father doth so intrust Christ with his sheep, as yet to take care of them himself; they are in the Father's hand, as well as in the Son's, and their being in the hands of both, doth assure them of the certainty of their perseverance; *None shall pluck them out of my hand: none shall be able to pluck them out of my Father's hand;* implying, that there are many that would pluck them out of their hands, sin, Satan, the world, &c, but they shall be kept by the almighty power of God, *through faith unto salvation;* for who can be too strong for omnipotent power?

### 30 I and my Father are one.

That is, one in essence and nature, one in authority and power, and not barely one in will and affection, one in concord or consent. That this is the genuine signification of the word, appears by a three-fold argument. 1. From the original words; it is not said, I and my Father are (*μεν*) one person in the masculine gender, but in the neuter (*εν*) I and my Father are one thing. Now if that thing be not the divine being, they cannot be one; for since the Father is confessed to be God, the Son cannot be one thing with the Father, if he be not God too. 2. It appears from the context: our Saviour, in the preceding verses, ascribed the preservation of his sheep to the power of his Father: *None can pluck them out of my Father's hand.* and he ascribes it also to his own power; *None shall pluck them out of my hand:* plainly intimating, that his sheep were equally safe in his own hand, as well as in his Father's; for says he, *I and my Father are one,* that is, one in power; and if they be one in power, they must be one in nature; unless we make an almighty creature, which is a contradiction. 3. It appears evidently by what follows in the

next verse, that the Jews understood our Saviour in this sense, why else did they take up stones to stone him? *We stone thee,* say they, *for blasphemy: because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.* The Jews took our Saviour's meaning aright, and were satisfied that when he said, *I and my Father are one,* he asserted himself to be God, and deserved to die; and well he had deserved it, if he had not been God. The adversaries of our Saviour's divinity, to elude the force of these words, which make so much against them, interpret the words thus, *I and my Father are one;* that is, say they, we are (*μια βαλυσος*) one in will and affection, one in concord and consent; This is a truth, but not the great truth contained in these words; for the believers are one with God, and one with another; namely, by a harmony of wills and desires; so far as they are regenerated, God's will and theirs are unisons; they will and desire the same thing, and are of one heart and of one mind. But God and Christ are one, in a much higher sense than Christ and believers are one; namely, one in essence and nature, one in authority and power, Christ being consubstantial with God. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ is for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, and for duration co-eternal, with the Father. 2. That although Christ be one in essence with the Father, yet are they distinct persons one from another: *I and my Father, we are one.* 3. Learn hence, That the Son being one in essence, one in power, one in consent and will with the Father, they are both equally concerned for the perseverance of the saints, for preserving them in grace, and for bringing them to glory: *None shall pluck them out of mine or my Father's hand; for I and my Father are one.* If the power be the same, the essence must be the same.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? 33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

Observe here, 1. How the Jews understood our Saviour affirming, that he and the

Father are one; that is, one in essence and nature, and himself a person equal with God. This they looked upon as blasphemy in him, to arrogate to himself what is proper to God only. Observe, 2. That the Jews looked upon it as a piece of justice in them to stone Christ for this apprehended blasphemy: *Then the Jews took up stones to stone him.* According to the law of God, the blasphemer was to be stoned to death; but then he was first to be judicially tried and judged: But such was the furious and fiery zeal of these Jews, that in a tumultuous manner they attempt to stone him to death. Lord! how far doth the fury of men, in opposing truth, outstrip the true zeal of thy faithful servants in defending the truth! Observe, 3. With what meekness our Lord receives this horrid indignity of stoning; (for it is probable that some stones were cast at him, he saying, *For which of those works do ye stone me?*) he clears his own innocence, and expostulates with them for rewarding him evil for good; *Many good works have I showed you from my Father;* that is, by my Father's authority and commission; I have been sight to the blind, feet to the lame, a tongue to the dumb, and hearing to the deaf: do any of these works deserve such usage as stoning at your hands? Learn hence, That such was the perfect and spotless innocence of Christ in all his actions, that he durst and did appeal to the consciences of his most inveterate adversaries: *For which of those works do ye stone me?*

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? 35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; 36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Here our Saviour by a two-fold argument vindicates himself from the imputation of blasphemy, in asserting himself to be God. 1. Because the Old Testament gave to magistrates and judges the title of gods, as Psal. lxxxii. 6. *I have said, ye are gods.* Now Christ argues strongly from the less to the greater, thus: "If judges and magistrates may be called gods, because they are commissioned by him, and derive their authori-

ty from him, how much more is that title due to me, who was sanctified, separated, and ordained for a mediator, and appointed to the work of redemption before I came into the world, and consequently was God from all eternity." This place the Socinians (those professed adversaries of our Saviour's godhead) produce to prove, that Christ was not God by nature, but only in respect of his sanctification and mission. It is a certain truth, that he that was sanctified and sent, was the Son of God; but he was not therefore the Son of God, because sanctified and sent. His sanctification was not the ground of his sonship; but his sonship was the cause of his sanctification, Christ was not therefore God's Son, because he was sanctified and sent; but he was therefore sanctified and sent, because he was his Son. He was a Son before he was sent, even from eternity, otherwise it must have been said that God sent him to be his Son, and not that God sent his Son. This supposes him before he was sent to have been actually his Son, as certainly he was from before the foundations of the world. Prov. viii. 23. *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.*

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. 38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me: and I in him.

Here we have a second argument, by which our Saviour proves, that it was no blasphemy to call himself God, but that he was God in very deed; namely, an argument taken from his works: *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.* And the argument runs thus: If (says Christ) I do those miraculous works, which no power less than a divine power can effect, then you ought by these works to be led to believe and acknowledge, that I am truly and really God; but the works which I do are the effect and product of an omnipotent power, therefore you ought to believe, that I am one in essence with the Father, there being a mutual in-existence of one person in the other, so that the Father is in me, and I in him; and thus *I and the Father are one.* Learn hence, That Christ never required of his disciples and followers an implicit faith, or a blind obedience; but as he submitted his doctrine

to the trial of reason, so he submitted his miracles to the examination and judgment of sense: therefore he says, *If I do not the works of my Father, that is, divine works, believe me not to be a divine person.*

39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand; 40 And went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. 41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. 42 And many believed on him there.

Observe here, 1. The violence and fury of these unbelieving Jews, against the holy and innocent Jesus! *They sought again to take him.* Observe, 2. The prudential care of Christ for his own preservation; his time being not yet come, he withdraws from Jerusalem, the nest of his enemies, and goes beyond Jordan: when Christ was persecuted in one city, he fled to another; he has sanctified a state of persecution to his ministers, and members, by his own being in it. 'Tis no disgrace for any of them to fly, when their Captain did it, and bids them do it, saying, *When they persecute you in one city, flee unto another.* Observe, 3. The success of Christ's ministry beyond Jordan: *Many resorted to him, and believed on him.* This place about Jordan was the place where John had exercised a great part of his ministry, and now, many years after John's death, the fruit of his ministry appears; for *many believed on him there*; that is, about Jordan, where John had preached and baptized. Learn hence, That the labours of faithful ministers may seem to be lost, and lie long like seed under the ground, and yet at last, by some new watering, may spring up, and the fruit appear in abundance. Here John's ministry about Jordan hath fresh fruit upon Christ's coming long after John was dead. Observe, 4. The dignity of Christ above John, *John did no miracle*; but Christ did all. The wisdom of God so ordered it, that though the Old-Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha, wrought many miracles for the confirmation of their divine mission, yet John the Baptist coming immediately before Christ, as his messenger and forerunner, wrought none, for these three reasons probably: 1. That so the

glory of Christ in working miracles, when he came upon the stage of his ministry, might be the more clear and evident. 2. That the evidence of Christ being the Messias, might be the more clear by the miracles which he wrought. 3. That the minds of the people might not be divided and distracted between John and Christ, and that there might be no pretence or competition between them: *Therefore John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of Christ were true.*

#### CHAP. XI.

NOW a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4 When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

This chapter relates unto us the miraculous power of Christ, in raising of dead Lazarus, which, as it was one of his last, so was it one of the greatest miracles which he wrought; and yet we find none of the evangelists make mention of it, but only St. John: the reason is supposed to be this; because when the other evangelists wrote their history, Lazarus was then alive; (for Epiphanius says, he lived thirty years after he was raised by Christ;) and probably the mention of this relation might have brought Lazarus into danger and trouble; but St. John wrote his Gospel after Lazarus's death. This miracle was a sufficient demonstration of Christ's godhead: none but an almighty power could recall a man four days dead, from a settled corruption to a state of life. None but he that created Lazarus could thus make him anew. Here observe, 1. The tender sympathy of these two endeared sisters with their afflicted brother; they feel his sorrows, and acquaint their Saviour with his sufferings: *Lord! behold he whom thou lovest is sick.* They do not say, Our brother that loves thee is sick: *he whom thou lovest is sick*: thereby pleading not the merit of

Lazarus, but the merit of Christ. For how can the love of Christ, which is infinite and eternal, have any cause but itself. Note, The person whom Christ loved is sick, and dies. Learn thence, That strength of grace, and dearneſs of reſpect, even from Chriſt himſelf, cannot prevail either againſt death or againſt diſeaſes. Lazarus, whom Chriſt loved, is ſick. Obſerve, 2. The gracious answer which Chriſt ſent to the ſiſters' meſſage: *This ſickneſs is not unto death, but for the glory of God.* That is, This ſickneſs ſhall not bring upon him ſuch a death as he ſhall remain under the power of, to the general reſurrexion; but is only deſigned to give me an opportunity of glorifying God, by exerting my miraculous power in reſtoring him to life. Learn hence, 1. That as God's own glory is his ſupreme aim and end in all his actions, ſo in particular it is deſigned by him, in ſending afflictions upon his people, to glorify his power and wiſdom, mercy and love, in and upon them. The ſaints' ſickneſſes are all for the glory of God. 2. That God is glorified when his Son is glorified; as none do honour the Father who do not honour the Son, ſo the Father accounts himſelf glorified when the glory of the Son is advanced: *This ſickneſs is for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

5 Now Jeſus loved Martha, and her ſiſter, and Lazarus. 6 When he had heard therefore that he was ſick, he abode two days ſtill in the ſame place where he was. 7 Then after that ſaith he to his diſciples, Let us go into Judea again. 8 His diſciples ſay unto him, Maſter, the Jews of late ſought to ſtone thee; and goeſt thou thither again? 9 Jeſus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he ſtumbleth not, becauſe he ſeeth the light of this world. 10 But if a man walk in the night, he ſtumbleth, becauſe there is no light in him.

Obſerve, 1. What an happy becauſe an holy and religious family, was here, and much honoured by Chriſt: *Jeſus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.* Wherever true piety dwells, it draws the eye and heart of Chriſt towards it. Chriſt had fre-

quently and familiarly lodged under their roof, and he rewards them for their entertainment with his love: *Jeſus loved Martha and her ſiſter.* Where note, That Martha is here named firſt, though elſewhere Mary had the precedency; to ſhow, no doubt, that they were both equally dear to Chriſt. Obſerve, 2. That although Chriſt loved Lazarus, yet he ſeems to neglect him: he delays going to him for ſome days. But could Chriſt abſent himſelf from one ſo long, whom he loved ſo well? We find he did. Let us take heed then that we do not miſinterpret Chriſt's delays. He ſeldom comes at our time, but never ſtays beyond his own: our Saviour had a double end in ſtaying thus long, namely, for greatening of the miracle, and confirming their faith. Had Chriſt gone before Lazarus was dead, they might have attributed his recovery rather to the ſtrength of nature than to Chriſt's miraculous power; or had Chriſt raiſed Lazarus as ſoon as he was dead, they might peradventure have thought it rather ſome trance or ecſtaſy, than a death and diſſolution; therefore Chriſt ſtays ſo many days, that God might be the more glorified, and his own omnipotent power the more magnified. We learn then, That when Chriſt delays to help them whom he dearly loves, it is always for wiſe ends and holy purpoſes. Obſerve, 3. How the diſciples, though they were dearly affected to Lazarus, (for they had learned to love where their Maſter loved,) yet they diſcourage Chriſt from going to him into Judea, for fear of violence offered to him: *Maſter, the Jews of late ſought to ſtone thee, and goeſt thou thither again?* Here the diſciples pleaded for their Maſter's ſafety, at the ſame time aiming at their own; they were to go with him into Judea, and they well knew that their danger was inwrapped in his, therefore they ſeek to divert him from his intention. O how has the fear of ſuffering made many of the friends of Chriſt decline an opportunity of glorifying God, and doing good to others! But cannot God give ſafety in the miſt of danger, if he pleaſeth? Let us not then not chooſe our way according to our own apprehenſion, either of danger or ſafety; but as we ſee God going before us, if our call be clear, let us go on with courage, whatever difficulties lie in our way. Obſerve, 4. How our Saviour corrects theſe fears for his diſciples, by acquainting them with his call from God, to undertake this journey into Judea: *Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk there-*

*in, he stumbleth not: but in the night he stumbleth.* As if Christ had said, "As he that walks in the day is in no danger of stumbling, but in the night he is in danger; so, as long as I have a call from God, and my working time lasts, there is a divine providence that will watch over me, and secure me from all danger: now my day is not fully spent, therefore it is not in the power of mine enemies to precipitate my passion, or to bring the night of sufferings upon me, before the appointed time; but ere long the night will come on, the working time will be over, and then shall both I and you stumble upon death; but while the day lasteth we are safe." Learn hence, 1. Every man has his twelve hours, that is, his working time, assigned him by God in this world. 2. Whilst these hours are not spent, and whilst his working time is unexpired, he shall not stumble, he shall not die, he shall not be disabled from working, while God has any work for him to do; neither the malice of men, nor the rage of devils, shall take him off till his work be finished. 3. Every man has his night as well as his day, in which he must expect and prepare to stumble; that is, to fall by death; for, when God has done his work by us and with us, he will withdraw his protection from us, but not his care over us. We stumble upon death, and fall into the grave: but God receives us to himself, and at the end of our working season rewards us for our work.

11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour cometh near to Bethany, tells his disciples that Lazarus sleepeth; that is, plainly, he was dead. This showed his omniscience, and that he was truly God; for he had received no advice of his death from any person, but as God he knew that he was deceased. Observe, 2. The sweet title given both to death and Lazarus: death is called a *sleep*, Lazarus is styled a *friend*; yet Christ says, not my friend, but our friend Lazarus sleepeth; intimating that gracious familiarity and mutual friendship which was betwixt himself and all his members. Learn hence, 1. That all true believers are Christ's friends. 2. That the friends of Christ must die as well as others. 3. That their death is but a sleep. Our friend

Lazarus sleepeth. It followeth, *but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.* Observe, Christ says not, We will go and awake him; but, I will go, and I will awake him. The disciples, who were companions in the way, must not be partners in the work; witnesses they may be, actors they cannot be; none can awake Lazarus but the Maker of Lazarus. Who can command the soul to come down and meet the body, and who can command the body to rise up and meet the soul, but that God that created both soul and body? Lord! it is our comfort against the dread and terror of death, that our resurrection depends upon thy almighty power. *I will go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. 14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. 16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Observe here, 1. How desirous the disciples were that Christ should not go to Bethany where Lazarus was, Bethany being within two miles of Jerusalem, where the seat of our Saviour's enemies was. But our Lord, knowing his call to be clear, resolves to go: *Nevertheless*, says Christ, *Let us go unto him.* O love, stronger than death! the grave cannot separate betwixt Christ and his friends. Other friends accompany us to the brink of the grave, and there they leave us to worms and dust; for death hath both horror and noisomeness to attend it: but for thee, O Saviour, the grave-stone, the earth, the coffin, are no bounders of thy dear respects. Blessed be God, that neither life nor death can separate from the love of Christ; but even after death and burial he is graciously affected to those he loves. Christ has a gracious regard to the dust of his saints: though his holy ones see corruption, they shall not always lie under the power of corruption; their dead bodies are a part of the undoubted members of Christ's mys-

tical body. Blessed be God, the time is coming, when Christ shall knock at the door of his children's graves, and call them out of their bed of dust, *and they shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.* Observe, 2. The wise and holy design of Christ in delaying to go to Bethany till Lazarus was dead: namely, that he might at once raise Lazarus's dead body, and his disciples' faith, confirming them in the belief that he was the Son of God, and the true Messiah. But could the faith of the apostles want confirmation, who had seen so many miracles wrought by our Saviour, and had lived under the ministry all the time of it? Yes; the faith of the most eminent saints, even of the apostles themselves, wants confirmation in this state of weakness and imperfection, and is capable of growth. *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.* Observe, 3. The great passion which Thomas expresses upon the notice given by Christ of Lazarus's death: *Plainly Lazarus is dead,* says Christ, *Let us go and die with him,* says Thomas. O what passionate and impatient impressions do sometimes drop from our mouths on occasion of the death of our dear relations; we are ready to be so affected with the death of our friends, as to wish ourselves out of the world, that we might be with them. But we must remember, that it is God that appoints us our several posts, and particular stations, which we must keep till the wisdom of God sees fit to remove us.

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already. 18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off. 19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him; but Mary sat *still* in the house. 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

Observe here, 1. The length of time which Christ designedly delayed before he would come to Lazarus's grave: he was

not above six miles off Bethany, being within two miles of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem within four miles of Bethabara, where Christ now was, and yet our Saviour came not of four days; doubtless, that the miracle of Lazarus's resurrection might be the more conspicuous and remarkable. Christ could as easily have cured Lazarus being sick, as have raised him being dead, and as easily have raised him the first day as the fourth day; but that had not carried along with it such a full conviction of Christ's almighty power. Therefore, that he might draw the eyes of their faith more stedfastly to behold and admire his almighty power, our Saviour defers his coming till Lazarus had been dead four days. Observe, 2. The civil usage of mourning with those that mourned for the dead: anciently they mourned thirty days, and sometimes forty, for a dear relation, *Numb. xx. 29.* During which time, neighbours and friends came to visit and relieve them in their sadness, with such consolatory arguments as they had. Christian religion doth not condemn natural affection; human passions are not sinful if not excessive: to be above the stroke of passion is a condition equal to angels; to be in a state of sorrow without the sense of sorrow, is a disposition beneath the beasts; but duly to regulate our sorrows, and set boundaries to our grief, is the wisdom, the duty, the interest, and the excellency of a christian. As to be above all passions will be our happiness in heaven, so to regulate and rectify our passions is a great part of our holiness on earth. Observe, 3. Although Martha was a true mourner for the death of her brother, yet she doth not so far indulge to grief, but upon the first notice of Christ's approach, she arises to go forth to meet him, with a mournful moan in her mouth, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* Where observe, How faith and infinity were mixed together; faith appeared in that firm persuasion which she had of Christ's power, as if death durst not show his face in Christ's presence: *Hadst thou been here, my brother had not died.* But then her infirmity appeared in limiting Christ both to time and place: to place, *If thou hadst been here*; as if Christ could not, if he had pleased, save his life, absent as well as present. Then to time, *Now he stinketh*; as if she had said, "You are come, but, alas! too late; you have staid too long, he is past recovery, the grave hath swallowed him up." As if death would not deliver

up his prisoner at the command of Christ. O ! the imperfect composition of the best of saints ! what a mixture of faith and infirmity is found in the holiest and best of christians ! This also farther appears in her next words, ver. 22. *I know, that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, he will give it thee.* She seems not to believe that Christ was able to raise him by his own immediate power, but must obtain power from God to do it, as the prophets were wont to do that raised the dead. She thought Christ a person highly in God's favour, but scarce believed him able to raise Lazarus by his own power : had her faith extended to a belief that Christ was equal with the Father, and that the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him, she would not have questioned his power to raise him from the grave ; for though Christ as Mediator did apply himself by prayer to God at the raising of dead Lazarus, ver. 41, 42, yet as God he had power of himself 'to raise Lazarus, as almighty power communicated with his essence from the Father, by an eternal and ineffable generation.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this ?

Here observe, 1. Christ's meek answer to Martha's passionate discourse. He takes no notice of the forementioned failings, but comforts her with a promise of her brother's resurrection : *Thy brother shall rise again.*—Thence learn, That the knowledge and belief of the general resurrection is, and ought to be, a sufficient support under the loss of our endeared friends, who die in the Lord. Observe, 2. That the doctrine of the general resurrection was no new doctrine ; Job believed it, ch. xix. 26 ; Daniel published it, ch. xii. 1 ; the Pharisees had a notion of it ; but Martha here makes it an article of her faith : *I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.* Observe, 3. How Christ particularly instructs Martha in the cause of the resurrection, acquainting her, that he himself

is the author and efficient cause of it : *I am the resurrection and the life.* That is, I am the author and principal efficient cause of the resurrection ; and this with respect to both natures : 1. His divine nature is the efficient cause of the resurrection ; he shall raise our bodies out of the dust, by the power of the godhead. 2. His human nature is the exemplary cause or pattern of the resurrection ; for which reason Christ is called the *first-born from the dead.* For though some were raised before him, yet was his resurrection the cause of their resurrection. Hence, St. Paul argues from Christ's resurrection, the certainty of the resurrection of his members : Christ and believers are one mystical body ; therefore is not Christ perfectly risen till all his members are risen with him. Indeed Christ's personal resurrection was perfect when he arose, and all believers arose representatively in him ; yet, till all believers arise personally, the resurrection of Christ has not received its utmost perfection ; but there is somewhat behind of the resurrection of Christ. Most fitly then might our Saviour assert, *I am the resurrection and the life.* Observe, 4. That Christ not only asserts himself to be the resurrection, but also the life ; *I am the resurrection and the life.* That is, I am the cause of life natural, spiritual, and eternal : *And whosoever loveth and believeth in me, shall never die :* that is, eternally. Though his body shall die because of sin, yet his spirit shall live because of righteousness.

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord : I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. 28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. 29 As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him. 30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. 31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. 32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet,

saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

Observe here, 1. The full confession which Martha makes of her faith in Christ as God; *Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* A confession which comes nearest to that of St. Peter (*Matt. xvi. 16.*) of any that we meet with in scripture: nay, it seems more full than Peter's confession: for those additional words, *which should come into the world,* are not in his confession: the sum is, she believed Christ to be the very Messiah, who was typified and prefigured, prophesied of, and promised to the Old-Testament saints, as the person that in the fulness of time should come into the world for the redemption and salvation of it: *Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* Hence learn, That Christ is never rightly believed in, nor regularly depended upon for salvation, except he be owned and acknowledged to be the eternal Son of God. Martha was now fully persuaded of Christ's divine nature, of which the best of the disciples, till after our Saviour's resurrection, had but a faint and uncertain persuasion. Observe, 2. How earnest and intent our Saviour was to despatch the errand he came upon; namely, to raise Lazarus from the grave, and to comfort the two mournful sisters: he would not so much as enter the house, till he had effected his work; and therefore he goes straight to the grave, which probably was the place where Mary met him. Lord! it was thy meat and drink to do the will of thy Father; it was thy meat and drink by day, thy rest and repose by night. How unlike are we to thyself, if we suffer either our pleasures or our profits to divert us from our duty! Observe, 3. What haste and speed Mary makes to attend upon our Saviour: she arose quickly, and came unto him. Mary's love added wings to her motion. The Jews, observing her hasty motion, have a loving suspicion that she is gone to the grave to weep there: but their thoughts were too low; for whilst they supposed that she went to a dead brother, she was waiting upon a loving Saviour. And she that used to sit at Jesus's feet, now falls at his feet, with an awful veneration: the very gesture was supplicatory; and her humble prostration was seconded with a doleful lamentation, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had*

*not died.* Where observe, a mixture of faith with human infirmity. Here was strength of faith in ascribing so much power to Christ, that his presence could preserve from death; but here was infirmity in supposing the necessity of Christ's presence for this purpose. Certainly he that did raise him from death, being present, could have preserved him from dying, being absent, had he pleased. This was Mary's moan, *Lord, hadst thou been here, my brother had not died;* full of affection, but not free from frailty and infirmity. However, Christ takes no notice of her errors and infirmity; but all the reply we hear of is a compassionate groan, which the following verses acquaint us with.

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

Observe here, 1. The condolency and tender sympathy expressed by our Saviour upon this occasion: *He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled:* Or, as the original has it, he troubled himself; intimating, that our Saviour's passions were pure and holy, not like ours, muddy and mixed with sinful imperfection. The commotion of his affections were like the shaking of pure water in a crystal glass, which still remains clear, and they arose and were calmed at his pleasure; he was not overpowered by them, but had them at his command. Learn hence, That as Christ took upon him the human nature, so he did assume also human affections, thereby evidencing himself to be our brother and near kinsman, according to the flesh. Learn, 2. That the passions and affections, which our Saviour had and expressed, were always holy and innocent: he was not without them, but he was above them; they did never violently and immoderately trouble him, but when he pleased he troubled himself. *Jesus groaned in spirit,* and troubled himself. Observe, 2. How our Saviour manifests his condolency and



tender sympathy with Martha and Mary, by his weeping, *Jesus wept*; partly from compassion, and partly for example; in compassion, first to humanity, to see how miserable sin had debased the human nature, and rendered man like unto the brute beasts that perish. Secondly, in compassion to Lazarus, whom he was now about to bring back into a sinful and troublesome world. Thus St. Jerome, *Non flevit Christus lachrymas nostras, &c.* "Christ (says he) did not weep our tears; he mourned over Lazarus, not because dead, but because now to be brought again to life." Again, Christ wept for our example, to fetch sighs and tears from us at the sight of others' miseries, and especially at the funerals of our godly friends. Learn hence, That mourning and sorrow, and this expressed by tears and weeping, is an affection proper for those that go to funerals, provided it be decently kept within due bounds, and is not excessive: for immoderate sorrow is hurtful to the living, dishonourable to the dead; neither is it an argument of more love, but an evidence of less grace. Note, 3. How the Jews, observing Christ's sorrow for, admire his love to, dead Lazarus: *Behold, how he loved him!* Christ's love to his people is admirable and soul-amazing; such as see it may admire it, but can never fully comprehend it. Note, 4. How some of the malicious Jews attempt to lessen the reputation of our Saviour, not willing to own him to be God, because he did not keep Lazarus from dying: as if Christ could not be the Son of God, because he did not at all times, and in all cases, exert and put forth his divine power. Whereas Christ acted freely, and not necessarily, governing his actions by his own wisdom, as he saw most conducing to the ends and purposes of his own glory.

38 Jesus therefore, again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days. 40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? 41 Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the

dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! 44 And he that was dead, came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

In these verses we find our Saviour addressing himself to the miracle of raising Lazarus from the grave. First, he commands them to take away the stone. But could not that voice which raised the dead, remove the stone? Yes, no doubt; but it is always the will of Christ that we put forth our utmost endeavours, and do what we can, in order to our own deliverance. To remove the stone, and untie the napkin, was in their power; this therefore they must do; but to raise the dead was out of their power; this therefore will Christ do alone. Our hands must do their utmost, before Christ will put forth his help. The stone being thus removed, his eyes begin; they are lifted up to heaven, his Father's throne, from whence he expects to derive his power. His tongue seconds his eyes, and he prays unto his Father. Christ, as God, wrought this miracle by his own power. Consider him as Mediator, and so he looks up to his Father by prayer; yet we hear of no prayer, but a thanksgiving only. Christ's will was his prayer; whatever Christ willed, God granted, Christ and his Father having one essence, one nature, and one will. Neither was it fit for Christ to pray vocally and audibly, lest the unbelieving Jews should say, he did it by entreaty, nothing by power. Observe farther, That as Christ, when he spake to his Father, lifted up his eyes; so, when he spake to dead Lazarus, he lifted up his voice and cried aloud. This Christ did, that the strength of the voice might answer the strength of the affection, since we vehemently utter what we earnestly desire; also that the greatness of the voice might answer to the greatness of the work; but especially that the hearers might be witnesses, that this mighty work was performed,

not by any magical enchantments, which are commonly mumbled forth with a low voice, but by an authoritative, and divine command. In a word, might not Christ utter a loud voice at the raising of Lazarus, that it might be a representation of that shrill and loud voice of the last trumpet at the general resurrection which shall sound into all graves, and raise all flesh from their bed of dust? Observe next, As the manner of our Lord's speaking with a loud voice, so the words spoken by him: *Lazarus, come forth.* Mark, Christ doth not say, *Lazarus, revive*; but, as if he supposed him already alive, he says, *Lazarus, come forth*; to let us know that they are alive to him, who are dead to us. Mark also, what a commanding word this was, *Come forth!* Not that it was in the power of these loud commanding words to raise Lazarus, but in the quickening power of Christ which attended these words. O blessed Saviour! it is thy voice which we shall ere long hear sounding into the bottom of the grave, and raising us from our bed of dust. It is thy voice that shall pierce the rocks, divide the mountains, and echo forth throughout the universe, saying, *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.* Observe lastly, how readily obedient Lazarus was to the call and command of Christ: *He that was dead came forth*: And if Lazarus did thus instantly start up at the voice of Christ in the day of his humiliation, how shall the dead be roused up out of their graves by that voice which shall shake the powers of heaven, and move the foundations of the earth, in the day of his glorification! Question, But where was Lazarus's soul all that while that he was dead? If in heaven, was it not a wrong to him to come from thence? if not, doth it not prove that the soul sleeps as well as the body? Answer, Souls go not to heaven by necessitation, as the fire naturally and necessarily ascends upwards, but are disposed of by God as the supreme Governor; those that have served him go to heaven, and those that have served the devil go to hell; and those that are not yet judged to either place, but are to live presently again upon earth, as Lazarus was, are reserved by God accordingly; whether shut up in the body as in a swoon, or whether kept in the custody and hands of an angel not far from the body, waiting his pleasure, either to restore it to the body, or to return it to its proper place of bliss or misery, the scripture has not told us whether; and it

would be too great curiosity to enquire, and greater presumption to determine.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. 46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. 47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation.

Observe here, 1. The different effects which this miracle had upon these Jews who were present at the raising of Lazarus. Some of them believed on Christ; but others, persisting in their unbelief, went to the Pharisees, and informed against him. Notwithstanding all the evidence which our Saviour gave of his being the Messiah, by the miracles which he wrought, yet many rejected him, and refused to believe on him, to their unutterable and inevitable condemnation. Observe, 2. How greatly disturbed the Pharisees were upon the account of our Saviour's miracles: knowing how proper an argument they were to convince men, they concluded, that if Christ were suffered to go on and work miracles, he would draw all men after him. Learn thence, That Jesus proved himself to be the true Messiah by the miracles which he wrought, his enemies themselves being judges. For we find here, the worst of our Saviour's enemies were afraid of his miracles, that by them he would draw all men after him: *If we let him alone, all men will believe on him.* Observe, 3. What was the ground of the Pharisees' fear, if they let Christ go on to work miracles; that he would have so many followers as would alarm the Romans, and awaken their jealousy, and cause them to come upon them with an army, to deprive them of the little liberty they indulged them, and take away their place and nation. *Their place*; that is, their place of worship, the temple: *and their nation*: that is, bring the whole body of the Jewish nation to utter destruction. Learn hence, How all the enemies and opposers of Christ and his kingdom do endeavour to colour their quarrel with

some specious pretences, that they may hide the odiousness of their practices from the eye of the world, and may not be openly seen to fight against God. Thus the Pharisees here persecute our Saviour, not as the Messias, (though the miracle he wrought were a sufficient evidence that he was such,) but as one who would bring ruin upon their nation. *If we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.*

49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this spake he not of himself: but, being high priest that year, he prophesied, That Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

The foregoing verses acquainted us with the apprehension which the chief priests had of the necessity of taking away the life of our blessed Saviour: *Lest the Romans should take away both their place and nation.* Now here in these verses Caiaphas the high priest delivers his opinion for preventing of this danger; he tells the rest, that they ought not to boggle at the matter, but come to a positive and peremptory resolution to provide for the public safety, right or wrong; and that it is a great folly to prefer one man's life, though never so innocent, before a nation's welfare: a most wicked and devilish speech. As a judge he regarded not what was lawful, but as a wicked politician he consulted what was expedient; he declares, that one man, though never so good and holy, though never so just and innocent, had better die, than a whole nation suffer; whereas it is in any case unlawful to do evil that good may come. Learn hence, That although it be the duty of all persons to pray for, and endeavour after, the public welfare of a church and nation, whereof they are members; yet it is altogether unlawful to promote the greatest national good by wicked and unlawful means. Observe farther, How God overruled the tongue of Caiaphas be-

yond his own intention, prophetically to foretell that great good, which by our Saviour's death should redound to the world, and that the fruit and benefit of his death should not only extend to the Jews, but to the Gentiles also; and that he should gather in one body, or church, all that truly believe in him, though far and wide dispersed upon the face of the earth. Hence learn, 4. That the spirit of prophecy did fall sometimes upon very bad men, and God has been pleased to reveal some part of his mind to the worst of men. Thus Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar had in their dreams a revelation from God, what things he intended to do. Learn, 2. That it is consistent with the holiness of God, sometimes to make use of the tongues of the worst of men, to publish and declare his will. Caiaphas here, though a vile and wicked man, was influenced by God to prophesy and speak as an oracle. Almighty God may, when he pleases, employ wicked men this way, without any prejudice to his holiness. *This Caiaphas spake not of himself; but, being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation.*

53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. 54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. 55 And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

Observe here, 1. How baneful and destructive evil counsel is, especially out of the mouths of leading men, and how soon embraced and followed. Caiaphas no sooner propounds the putting of Christ to death, but from that day forward they lie in wait to take him. The high-priests had satisfied

their consciences, and now they made all possible speed to put their malicious designs and purposes in execution. Observe, 2. The prudential care and means which our Lord used for his own preservation, to avoid their fury : he withdraws himself privately into a place called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. Learn, As Christ himself fled, so is it lawful for his servants to flee, when their life is conspired against by their bloody enemies, and the persecution is personal. Observe, 3. When the time was come that he was to expose himself ; when the time of the passover drew near, in which he, being the true Paschal Lamb, was to be slain, to put an end to that type ; he withdrew no more, but surrenders himself to the rage and fury of his enemies, and dies a shameful death for shameless sinners, as the next chapter more at large informs us.

# CHAP. XII.

**T**HEN Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter acquainted us with the prudential care of Christ in withdrawing from the fury of his enemies in and about Jerusalem, who were consulting his destruction ; his time not being fully come, he gets out of the way of his persecutors. But now the passover being at hand, which was the time that this Lamb of God was to die as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, our Lord comes forth first to Bethany, and then to Jerusalem, not fearing the teeth of his enemies, but with a fixed resolution to encounter death and danger for the salvation of his people. His example teacheth us, that although we are bound by all lawful means and prudential methods to preserve ourselves from the unjust violence of our persecutors, yet when God's time for our sufferings is come, and we evidently see that it is his will that we suffer for his sake, we ought to set our faces very cheerfully towards it, and resign up ourselves to the wisdom and will of God. Thus did Christ here : chap. xi. 54. we find he withdrew from suffering, his hour not being then come ; but now, when the passover was nigh at hand, which was the time when he was to suffer, he sets his face towards Jerusalem, and withdraws no more.

2 There they made him a supper ; and Martha served : but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair : and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. 4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor ? 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor ; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. 7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone : against the day of my burying hath she kept this. 8 For the poor always ye have with you ; but me ye have not always.

In these verses, an account is given of our Saviour's entertainment at Bethany after he had raised Lazarus. A supper is made for him, at which Martha served, and Lazarus sat with him, but Mary anoints Christ with precious ointment. Where note, 1. The action which this holy woman performed : she pours a box of precious ointment upon our Saviour's head, as he sat at meat, according to the custom of the eastern countries at their feasts. I do not find that any of the apostles were at thus much charge and cost to put honour upon our Saviour, as this poor woman was. From whence we learn, 1. That where strong love prevails in the heart, nothing is adjudged too dear for Christ, neither will it suffer itself to be outshined by any examples. The weakest woman that strongly loves her Saviour will vie with the greatest apostle, and piously strive to express the fervour of her affection towards him. Observe, 2. How this action was resented and reflected upon by murmuring Judas, who valued this ointment at three hundred pence, and gruded the bestowing of it upon Christ. He accused this holy woman of needless prodigality. Lord ! how doth a covetous heart think every thing too good for thee ! He that sees a pious action performed, and seeks to lessen or undervalue it, shows himself possessed with a spirit of envy. Judas's invidious spirit makes

him censure an action which Christ highly approved. Hence learn, That men who know not our hearts, may through ignorance or prejudice censure and condemn those actions which God doth commend, and will graciously reward. Happy was it for this poor woman that she had a more righteous judge to pass sentence upon her action than wicked Judas. Observe, 3. How readily our holy Lord vindicates this poor woman; she says nothing for herself, nor need she, having an advocate, who gives the reason for her action: *She did it for my burial.* As kings and great persons were wont in those eastern countries, at their funerals, to be embalmed with odours and sweet perfumes; so, saith our Saviour, this woman, to declare her faith in me as her King and Lord, doth with this box of ointment, as it were before-hand, embalm my body for its burial. True faith will put honour upon a crucified as well as a glorified Saviour. This holy woman accounts Christ worthy of all honour in his death, believing it would be a sweet-smelling sacrifice unto God, and a savour of life unto his people.

9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

Observe here, It was not zeal but curiosity, which brought these persons at this time to Christ; they had an itching desire to see Lazarus, to inquire after the truth of his death, and possibly after the state of the dead, and the condition that separate souls are in after death. Thus the miracles of Christ drew many followers after his person who were never converted by his doctrine. It was the sin of many, when Christ was here upon earth, that they flocked after him, rather out of curiosity than out of conscience, and chose rather to gaze upon his works, than to fall in love with the worker. The multitude here came to Bethany, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also.

10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.

Observe here, 1. the unreasonableness of that rage and madness, which was found in the chief priests against Lazarus: *They consulted together how they might put Lazarus to death.* But supposing that Christ had spoken blasphemy, in making himself equal with God, or supposing that he had broken the sabbath by curing the man that was born blind, on that day; yet what had Lazarus done, that he must be put to death? But from hence we learn, That such as have received special mercy and favour from Christ, or are made the instruments of his glory, must expect to be made the mark and the butt of malicious enemies. Christ had highly honoured Lazarus, by raising him from the grave; and here there is a resolution against his life whom Christ had thus highly honoured; *The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death.* Observe, 2. The cause why the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death; namely, *Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.* That is, many of the Jews, seeing the miracle of Christ's raising Lazarus from the grave, were drawn thereby to believe in Jesus Christ; and this so enraged the chief priests against Lazarus, that they sought to put him to death. Learn hence, That nothing so enrages the enemies of Christ, as the enlargement of his kingdom, and the sight of the number of believers daily increasing. This provokes the devil's wrath, and his servants' rage.

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 Took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord! 14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. 16 These things understood not his disciples at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

Here we have recorded the carriage of the multitude towards our Saviour, when he

came near the city of Jerusalem : they take palms in their hands, and go forth to meet him, and cast their garments on the ground before him to ride upon : yea, they do not only disrobe their backs, but expend their breath in joyful acclamation and loud *Hosannas*, wishing all manner of prosperity to their meek, but mighty King. In this prince-like, yet poor and despicable pomp, doth our Saviour enter the famous city of Jerusalem. Lord ! how far wast thou from affecting worldly greatness and grandeur ! Thou despisest that glory which our hearts fondly admire. Yet because Christ was a King, he would be proclaimed such, and have his kingdom confessed, and applauded, and blessed ; yet that it might appear that his kingdom was not of this world, he abandons all worldly magnificence.

17 The people, therefore, that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. 18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing ? behold, the world is gone after him. 20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. 21 The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. 22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew : and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

Observe here, 1. How the multitude at Jerusalem came forth to meet Christ, when he was making his public entry into the city, hearing the fame of his miracles : *For this cause the people also met him, for that they had heard that he had done this miracle.* Observe, 2. How amongst others who came forth to meet our Saviour, certain Greeks, or Gentile proselytes, who came up to worship in the outward court of the temple, apply themselves to Philip, that he would help them to a sight of Jesus : *Sir, we would see Jesus.* It is probable that this desire to see Christ in these persons, proceeded from curiosity only. But if it did produce true faith in them, we may hence infer, that a spiritual sight of

Christ, by the discerning eye of a believer's faith, is the most glorious, and consequently the most desirable, sight in the world ; and so must needs be, for it is a soul-ravishing, a soul-satisfying, soul-transforming, and a soul-saving sight. This sight of Christ by faith will constrain a soul highly to admire and greatly to condemn him. It will incline a soul to choose him, and cleave unto him, and will set a soul a longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of him, Luke ii. 29. *Mine eyes have seen thy salvation ; Now let thy servant depart.* Observe lastly, How the envious Pharisees were galled, and cut to the heart to see such a multitude both of Jews and Greeks crowding out of the city to meet Jesus in his triumphal entrance into the city. *The Pharisees said, Behold, the world is gone after him.* Learn hence, That in the day of Christ's greatest solemnity and triumph, there will not be wanting some persons of such a cankered disposition, that they will neither rejoice themselves, nor can they endure that others should. This was the case of the wicked Pharisees here.

23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Observe here, 1. How our blessed Saviour entertains his followers with a discourse concerning his approaching death and sufferings ; *The hour is coming that the Son of man shall be glorified.* Observe, 2. How he arms his disciples against the scandal of the cross, by showing them the great benefit that would redound by his death unto all mankind : and this by a similitude taken from grain. *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.* That is, as corn unsown, lodged in the barn, or laid up in the chamber, never multiplies nor increases : but sow it in the field, and bury it in the earth, and it multiplies and increases, and brings forth a plentiful crop : so if Christ had not died, he had remained what he was, the eternal Son of God, but he had had no church in the world ; whereas his

death and sufferings made him fructify; that brought a plentiful increase of exaltation to himself, and salvation to his people. Observe, 3. How plainly our Saviour dealt with his followers: he did not deceive them with a vain hope and expectation of temporal happiness, but tells them plainly, that all that will be his disciples must prepare for sufferings, and not think their temporal life too dear to lay down for him when he calls them to it, this being the surest way to secure unto themselves life everlasting. *He that loveth his life shall lose it; but he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* Learn hence, That the surest way to attain eternal life is cheerfully to lay down our temporal life, when the glory of Christ, and the honour of religion, require it at our hand.

26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

That is, If any man assumes the title, and enters into the sacred engagement, of being Christ's servant, let his conversation correspond with his profession, and let him be willing to follow me in the thorny path of affliction and sufferings; from this assurance, that all his grievous sufferings shall end in eternal joys: *Where I am, there shall my servant be, and him will my Father honour.* Learn hence, 1. That all that will be Christ's servants, must be his followers; they must obey his doctrine, and imitate his example. 2. That Christ's servants must not expect better usage at the hand of an unkind world, than he their Master met with before them. 3. That such as serve Christ by following of him, shall at death see him as he is, and be with him where he is: *Where I am, there shall also my servant be.* 4. That God will crown the fidelity and constancy of Christ's servants, with the highest dignity and honour; *If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have

both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Whilst our Saviour was thus preaching of his own death and sufferings, a natural horror of his approaching passion (though such as was without sin) seizes upon him; his Father giving him a taste of that wrath which he was to undergo upon the cross for our sins. Hereupon he betakes himself to prayer. *Father, save me from this hour:* this was the harmless inclination of his sinless nature, which abhorred lying under wrath, and therefore prays against it; yet (as it were) recalling himself, he submits to what his office, as our surety, required of him, and prays again unto his Father to dispose of him as may most and best conduce to the purposes of his glory; *Father, glorify thy name.* Learn hence, 1. That mere trouble is no sin; Christ's soul was troubled: christianity doth not make men senseless; grace introduceth no stoical stupidity. 2. That fear of death, especially when accompanied with apprehensions of the wrath of God, is most perplexing and soul-amazing. *My soul is troubled: and what shall I say?* 3. No extremity of sufferings ought to discourage us from laying claim to that relation which God stands in to us as a Father. Our Saviour in the midst of his distress calls God, Father: *Father, save me from this hour.* 4. In the extremity of our sufferings, we may be importunate, but must not be peremptory, in our prayers; as Christ in his agony prayed more earnestly, so may we in ours, but always submissively; *Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour.* 5. That our exemption from suffering may sometimes be inconsistent with the glory of God: *Father, save me from this hour; Father, glorify thy name.* Observe lastly, The Father's answer to the Son's prayer: *There came a voice from heaven, saying, I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.* That is, as God the Father had been already glorified in his Son's life, doctrine, and miracles; so he would farther glorify himself in his death, resurrection, and ascension; as also by the mission of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the gospel for the conversion of the Gentiles to the ends of the earth. Learn hence, That the whole work of Christ, from the lowest degree of his humiliation, to the highest degree of his exaltation, was a glorifying of his Father: beglorified his Father by the doctrines which he

taught ; he glorified his Father by the miracles which he wrought, by the unspotted innocence of his life, and by his unparalleled sufferings at his death ; by his victorious resurrection from the grave, and by his triumphant ascension into heaven.

29 The people therefore that stood by and heard *it*, said that it thundered : others said, An angel spake to him. 30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. 31 Now is the judgment of this world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all ~~men~~ unto me. 33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Observe here, 1. The way of God in speaking to his people : by a voice in thunder, for the greater declaration of his glory and majesty. Thunderings and lightnings usually attended the voice of God, even in consolations, and when he spake comfortably to his own servants. Oh ! how dreadful and terrible then must the voice of God be to his enemies, when he shall come in flaming fire, to render vengeance to them ! If there was such dread and terror, such thunderings and lightnings, at the giving of the law ; Lord ! what will there be another day, when thou comest to punish the violation of that law ! Observe, 2. The end why God the Father now spake with an audible voice to Christ his son : it was for his consolation, and the people's confirmation. His soul being troubled, he stood in need, as Mediator, of comfort from his Father ; and the people had here a farther and fuller confirmation of his being the promised and true Messias, that so they might believe in him. *This voice came not because of me* ; that is, not only or chiefly because of me, but to confirm your faith in the belief of this great truth, that I am the Son of God, by whom the Father hath glorified, and will farther glorify his name. Observe, 3. Our Saviour declares a double effect and fruit of his death and passion. 1. The judgment of this world : *Now is the judgment of this world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out*. That is, my death shall be the devil's overthrow : will bring down sin, and deliver the world from the tyranny and dominion of sin and Satan. Thence

learn, 1. That Satan is the prince and ruler of all those who live in sin ; not a prince by legal right, but by tyrannical usurpation. 2. That this usurper, Satan, will not quit his possession, unless he be cast out. 3. That Christ by his death has cast out Satan, dethroned him, deprived him of his tyrannical usurpation. *Now is the prince of this world cast out* : that is, I will shortly by my death deliver the world from the slavery of sin, and dominion of Satan, and particularly from that idolatry, which the greatest part of the world were then in slavery under. The second effect and fruit of Christ's death which is here declared, is his drawing all men unto him : *When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me*. There is a two-fold lifting up of Christ : the first ignominious, when he was hung upon the cross : the second glorious, in the preaching of the gospel : by this he draws all men unto him ; that is, by the preaching of the gospel he calls and invites all persons to himself ; he offers the benefits of his death to all, and gathers a church to himself out of the Gentile as well as the Jewish world. Learn, 1. That all persons are naturally unwilling to come to Christ, they must be drawn. 2. That Christ meritoriously by his death, and instrumentally by the preaching of the gospel, draws sinners unto himself. 3. That it is not a few, or a small number, but a very great number, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, persons of all nations, sexes, ages, and conditions, whom Christ draweth : Not that all are effectually drawn to Christ, so as savingly to believe in him : but, by the preaching of the gospel, they are called and invited to him, and the benefits of his death are offered to them. Thus Christ being lifted up upon his cross, and on the pole of his gospel, draws all men unto him ; that is, doth what is sufficient to prevail with all men to believe on him, and to render those that do not so everlastingly inexcusable.

34 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever : and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ? 35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you :



for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. 36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Observe here, 1. The objection which the Jews made against our Saviour's being the true Messiah. Their argument runs thus: "It was foretold under the law, that Christ, or the Messiah, abideth for ever; but thou sayest, the Son of Man must be lifted up and die. How then canst thou be the promised Messiah?" The answer is, "In his state of humiliation unto death, he was lifted up; but, in his state of exaltation, he abideth for ever." Learn hence, That Christ's lifting up by death, and his abiding for ever, do very well consist together; for both are true of him, the one in his state of humiliation, the other in his state of exaltation. Observe, 2. Our Saviour returns no answer to their cavilling objection, nor doth he undertake to demonstrate how his sufferings and his abiding for ever are consistent; but gives them intimations that he was the light of the world; and advises them, whilst they had the light with them, to prize it highly, and improve it faithfully. *Yet a little while is the light with you: walk whilst ye have light, lest darkness come upon you.* Note here, 1. A choice and singular privilege enjoyed: *the light is with you*, a personal light, Christ; a doctrinal light, the gospel: both these brought with them a light of knowledge, answering our darkness of ignorance; a light of grace and holiness, answering our darkness of sin, which we had brought upon ourselves; and a light of joy and comfort, answering the darkness of misery and horror, which we lay under by reason of our guilt. Note, 2. The time of enjoying this privilege limited: *Yet a little while is the light with you.* The time of a people's enjoying the light and liberty of the gospel, it is a limited time, it is a short time. Note, 3. A duty enjoined by Christ answerable to the privilege enjoyed by us: *Walk whilst ye have the light.* An uniform and constant course of holy walking, according to the rule of the gospel, is the indispensable duty and obligation of all those that enjoy the light and liberty of the gospel; namely, to walk according to the precepts and commands of the gospel, an-

swerable to the privileges and prerogatives of the gospel, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords, and answerable to the glorious hope and expectation which the gospel raises us unto. Note, 4. A danger threatened to the neglecters of this duty: *Lest darkness come upon you.* Namely, a darkness of ignorance and judicial blindness, a darkness of error and seduction, a darkness of horror and despair, and the fatal and final darkness of death and hell: for all contempters of gospel-light, there is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever; where sin and torment run parallel, where torment makes them sin, and their sin feeds their torment.

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? 39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. 41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

The place which our evangelist alludes to, is, Isa. vi. 3. *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.* From whence a clear argument for Christ's divinity may be thus drawn. He whom Isaiah saw environed with seraphim, and praised as most holy by them, was the true and eternal God; for such acclamations belong to none but the great Jehovah, God blessed for evermore. But, says St. John, it was the glory of Christ that Isaiah saw in his vision, it was Christ whom he called, *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts*: therefore Christ is undoubtedly God blessed for evermore. For the evangelist was not speaking of the Father, but the Son, and cites these words out of Isaiah; so that it was the glory of the second Person that Isaiah saw and spake of, if the words of the evangelist be of any credit. Besides, the angels are too holy to give acclamations, belonging to God, to any but him that is God.

Observe here, 1. The astonishing infidelity and unbelief of the Jews, who heard our Saviour's doctrine, and were eye-witnesses of his miracles: *Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.* Let not the faithful ministers of Christ be discouraged, and overmuch dejected, at their want of success in dispensing of the gospel, when they observe and consider the small success of our Saviour's own ministry in the hearts and lives of his hearers; yea, though his ministry was accompanied with miracles, and though his miracles were many in number, mighty in nature, clear and obvious to sense, being wrought before their eyes, yet his ministry succeeded not and his miracles prevailed not. Lord, what little success has the offer of Christ in the gospel met with, from the first original tender to this day! Obstinate infidelity, and cursed hypocrisy, draw more souls to hell than all the devils in hell. Observe, 2. How the present infidelity of these unbelieving Jews was long before foretold and prophesied of by the prophet Esaias, chap. liii. 1. *Lord, who hath believed our report?* that is, our preaching. Where note, That Isaiah's complaint of the small success of his preaching, was a prophecy and prediction of the like success that Christ and his ministers should have under the gospel. Learn hence, That the gospel in all ages has met with more that have rejected it by unbelief than have savingly entertained it by faith. Isaiah complained before Christ, and his apostles and ministers in every age since, that few have believed their reports. Observe, 3. That though the present unbelief of the obstinate Jews was long foretold by the prophets of God, yet the prophets' prediction was no cause of their unbelief, or that which laid them under an impossibility of believing; but the fault lay in their own obstinate will, with respect to which, by the just judgment of God, they were blinded and hardened, for their contempt of Christ, the promised Messias. When men close their eyes wilfully, and say they will not see, it is just with God to close their eyes judicially, and say they shall not see, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, &c.* Learn hence, That the infidelity of the people is to be resolved into the perverseness of their own wills, and the evil dispositions of their own hearts, not to any judicial blindness or obduration wrought by God upon them antecedent to their own sin.

God's act of hardening was consequential upon their sinning.

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Observe here, 1. That though the generality of the Jews were thus hardened under Christ's ministry and miracles, yet there were some, and those of the chief rank, even rulers, that did believe on him; that is, they were under strong and powerful convictions, that he was the true and expected Messias. Even in times and places where obstinacy and infidelity most prevail, the ministry of the word shall not be altogether without its fruit; Christ here had some, and those of the rulers too, who believed on him, when others under the same word were hardened: *Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also, many believed on him.* Observe, 2. That though many of the chief rulers had a secret belief, or an inward persuasion, that Christ was the promised and expected Messias, yet it was not sufficient to make them openly own, confess, and avow him to be such, for fear of excommunication from the Pharisees: *They did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.* Slavish fear of men, and suffering by them, has hindered many from believing on Christ, and kept more from an open owning and confessing of him: *Because of the Pharisees they did not confess him.* Observe, 3. As the fear of suffering on the one hand, so the love of reputation on the other, kept them from owning and confessing Jesus to be the Christ: *They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God;* that is, they valued honour and applause from men, more than God's honouring and approving them. There is no greater snare to draw persons from their duty, than inordinate love and affection to their own credit and reputation. O! how often is the applause and commendation of men preferred before the testimony and approbation of God! Here was their snare, *They loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God.*

44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on

me, but on him that sent me. 45 And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. 46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, bath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken of myself: but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

In these verses we have our blessed Saviour's farewell sermon to the Jews, concerning his person, office, and doctrine; as touching his person, he acquaints them with his divine nature, his oneness and equality with the Father; and accordingly challenges not only the assent but also the obedience and adoration of their faith: *Jesus cried, saying, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.* That is, he that believeth on me, doth not believe on a mere man, but on him that is truly and really God, as well as man; and therefore he being true God, one in essence, and equal in power and glory with the Father, their believing in him was believing in God the Father that sent him. Observe, 2. The argument which our Saviour uses to prove that believers in Christ do believe in the Father: *He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.* That is, "He that seeth me spiritually, and by faith, seeth my Father to be one with me in essence, though not in person: and he that seeth me in my miraculous works which I do, seeth him also that sent me, by whom I do these mighty works." Learn hence, That we do not see Christ aright with the eye of our faith, unless we see him and believe him to be truly and really God; one with, and equal to, the Father: *He that seeth me, seeth in me him that sent me.* Learn, 2. That the Father is not to be seen but in the Son; nor can

believers know what the Father is, but by seeing what the Son is; and what they see the Son to be, that the Father is in him: *For he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.* Observe, 3. The dreadful judgment which Christ denounces against all unbelievers, and such as reject him, by rejecting of his gospel; for though, at Christ's first coming, his errand was not to judge the world, but to save the world, that is, to offer the tenders of salvation to lost sinners; yet at his second coming he would judge them at the last day, when the word preached to them, and rejected by them, will give a judicial testimony against them. Learn hence, 1. That Christ and his doctrine are inseparable; to receive his doctrine is to receive him; and to reject his doctrine is to reject him. 2. That such rejecters of Christ and the doctrine of the gospel, shall not escape the judgment of Christ at the great day. 3. That at the great day, were there no other witness against the rejecters of Christ and his gospel but the word preached, yet that alone will be sufficient both for their conviction and condemnation: *The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.* The word is now the rule of living, and it shall be hereafter the rule of judging: now it is the rule by which we must live to Christ, then it shall be the rule by which we shall be judged of Christ. Observe, 4. The argument and reason which our Saviour produces, to prove that the word of God, and the doctrine of the gospel, slighted and rejected, should condemn sinners at the great day. Namely, From the divine authority of his doctrine; for albeit his doctrine was his own, as he was true God, yet as man, and as mediator, it was not his own, but the Father's which sent him; so that his word and doctrine being divine, and the Father's as well as his, (for he did not speak of himself, that is, of himself alone and without the Father,) it is sufficient to judge and condemn all the rejecters and despisers of it. Learn thence, 1. That though the doctrine of the gospel be Christ's own as he is truly and really God, yet it was not his own as mere man exclusive of the Father, who is one God with him, and who gave him a commission and instruction, as Mediator, to preach and publish the glad tidings of the gospel; *For (says he) I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me gave me a commandment.* 2. That the doctrine which Christ delivered by command from the

Father, doth point out the way to eternal life, and will bring lost sinners thereunto, if they sincerely believe it and obey it: *I know that his commandment is life everlasting.* 3. That therefore sinners who reject the doctrine of Christ contained in the gospel, do highly dishonour, offend, and affront, both the Father, and the Son, and bring upon themselves a just and righteous judgment; and expose themselves to unutterable and inevitable condemnation: *The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

## CHAP. XIII.

**N**OW before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that the hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 2 And supper being ended, (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,) 3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

In this chapter is recorded the history of our Saviour's washing his disciples' feet; an action full of humility and condescension, and propounded to his followers' imitation. The circumstance of the time is here noted, when this act was done; namely, at the feast of the passover, when the time of our Saviour's departure was at hand; and having constantly and immutably loved his own, he expresses the permanency of his love towards them to the end, by this action of his, in washing their feet.—Here note, How Christ chose the time of the Jewish passover to suffer in, that he might prove himself to be the substance of that type; that he was the true Paschal Lamb, who by the sacrifice of his death did atone divine displeasure, and taketh away the sins of the world. Observe, 2. The means which the wisdom of God permitted, to bring the Lord of life to his ignominious death: and that was, the treason and perfidiousness of one of his own disciples, Judas Iscariot. Where observe, 1. The person betraying, Judas; Judas a professor and a preacher; Judas an apostle, being one of the twelve, whom Christ had chosen out of all the world to be his dearest friends. Can we won-

der to find friends unfriendly, or unfaithful towards us, when our Saviour had a traitor in his own house? Observe, 2. The heinousness of Judas's sin in betraying Christ; he betrayed Christ Jesus a Man, Christ Jesus his Master, Christ Jesus his Maker; the first was murder, the second treason. Lord, it is no strange and uncommon thing, for the vilest of sins, and most horrid impieties, to be acted by persons making the most eminent profession of thy holy religion! Observe, 3. What hand the devil had in the sufferings of our Saviour: he put it into Judas's heart to betray Christ, that is, he did suggest and inject such thoughts into his mind, which Judas instantly closed with. The devil being a spirit, has a quick access to spirits, and can instil his suggestions into them. As Christ did breathe upon his disciples, and they received the Holy Ghost, and were filled with the Spirit; so Satan breathes filthy suggestions into the spirits of men, and fills them with all manner of wickedness, even with the spirit of hell itself: *The devil put into the heart of Judas to betray him.*

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself: 5 After that, he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Observe here, The admirable humility and great self-denial of our Lord and Master: he arises from supper, whilst his disciples sat still, and he that came in the form of a servant, performs all the offices of the meanest servant to his disciples: he lays aside his upper garments, he girds himself with a towel, pours water into a bason, and begins to wash and wipe their feet, which lay out behind them, as they leaned at the table; all which was a most servile employment. Learn hence, That the wonderful humility of Jesus Christ inclined him to do the meanest offices of service unto his people, even to become a servant to them in the day of his humiliation; and though now glorified in heaven, he retains the same compassionate heart towards them as when here on earth: hereby instructing us, that it is our duty, in whatever station providence shall place us in the world, to stoop to the lowest offices of love and service towards our fellow-brethren. Lord, thou hast left the most amazing instance of self-denial for our encouragement and ex-

ample. Question, But how far doth this example bind us. Answer, It does not oblige to the individual act, but to follow the reason of the example; that is, after Christ's example, we ought to be ready to perform the lowest and meanest offices of love and service to one another.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. 8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. 9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. 11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

Observe here, 1. How Simon Peter refuses to admit of such a condescending act from Christ his Lord and Master, as the washing of his feet: *Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet.* It is a sinful humility to refuse the offered favours of Christ, because we are unworthy to receive them. Though we are not worthy of Christ, and of his love; yet Christ is worthy of us, and of our faith. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's reply to Peter's refusal: 1. He tells him, That there was more in it than the bare act of washing did at first sight import, and that he should know hereafter, what he did not understand now: *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* Learn hence, 1. That the servants of God themselves are oft-times much to seek, and cannot apprehend and understand at present, the actings and dealings of God with them; they understand not either the intent or the event of God's dispensations. 2. That although God's dealings with his children and people are for a while in the dark, and are not presently made known; yet there will come a time for the clearing and evidencing of them, when they shall understand that all his dispensations were in mercy to them. The second part of our Saviour's reply to

St. Peter follows, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me:* as if Christ had said, "Peter, this external act of mine, in washing thy feet, doth signify something farther, and imports my washing of thy soul from the guilt and defilement of sin, without which thou canst neither have interest in me, nor communion with me." Learn hence, 1. That so universal is the pollution of sin, that every soul stands in need of washing. 2. That Christ washeth all that have a part and interest in him, both from the guilt and pollution of all their sin. Observe, 3. That St. Peter now understanding better what was meant by this outward washing; namely, that it did signify and represent the defilement of sin; he is so far from refusing that Christ should wash his feet, that he offers hands and head and all to be washed by him; *Lord, not my feet only, &c.* Learn hence, That so thoroughly sensible are the saints of the filthiness and pollution of sin, that they desire nothing more than an inward, thorough, and prevailing purification of their whole man, by the blood and spirit of the Lord Jesus. Observe, 4. Our Saviour's reply to St Peter's last request: *He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet;* plainly alluding to the custom of those countries, where going abroad barefoot, or with thin sandals covering only a small part of their feet, they had frequent occasion to wash their feet, but need not to wash their whole bodies; in like manner, the saints and servants of God, who are already washed and cleansed by the blood of Christ from the guilt of their sins, and have a real work of renovation and sanctification begun in them by the Spirit of Christ, they ought to be daily purging and purifying their affections and actions, and labouring daily after further measures and degrees of sanctification. Learn hence, 1. That the holiest, the wisest, and the best of saints, whilst here in a world of sin and temptation, do stand in need of a daily washing by repentance, and according to their renewed and repeated acts of sin. 2. That all justified persons are in God's account clean persons: *Ye are clean, but not all;* that is, you are justified and pardoned, sanctified and cleansed, all of you, excepting Judas; whose heart was known to Christ, though his hypocrisy was hid from the disciples.

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said un-

to them, Know ye what I have done to you ? 13 Ye call me Master, and Lord : and ye say well : for so I am. 14 If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; ye ought also to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. 16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord ; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

In these words our Saviour declares to his disciples his intention and design in washing of their feet ; namely, to teach them by his example the duty of humility ; that as he had performed that act of abasement towards them, so should they be ready to perform all offices of love and humble condescension one towards another : *Behold, I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you.* Learn thence, That humility and mutual condescension amongst the members and ministers of Jesus Christ is a most necessary grace and duty, which the Son of God not only taught by his doctrine, but recommended and enforced by his example. Observe farther, The argument which Christ makes use of to press the imitation of his example upon them ; and that is drawn from the titles given to him by his disciples : *Ye call me Master and Lord ; and so I am.* Now servants ought to imitate their masters, and subjects to obey their lord and king. Christ is a Master, to teach and direct : a Lord, to govern and protect. As he is a Master, we are to learn in his school ; as he is a Lord, we are to serve in his house : he must be submitted to as a Prince, as well as relied upon as a Saviour. It is in vain to expect salvation from him, if we do not yield subjection to him. Another argument which our Lord makes use of to press his disciples to imitate his example, is drawn from his dignity and superiority over them : *The servant is not greater than his Lord.* As if Christ had said, " Though you, my disciples, are to have a very high and honourable station in the gospel church, yet let not this swell you with pride, but be ye mutually condescending to each other, remembering you are but servants to myself, and ought to be so to one another ; and the servant is not greater than his Lord. Learn hence, 1.

That whatever dignity Christ confers upon his servants and officers, yet he is over them all, superior to them, and above them. 2. That the consideration of Christ's dignity, and his ministers' meanness, ought to keep their minds humble and lowly, and far from affecting superiority over their brethren : *The servant is not greater than his lord, nor he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Our Lord here intimates unto us these two things : 1. The necessity of knowledge, in order unto practice. 2. The necessity of practice, in order unto happiness. A man may know the will of God indeed, and not do it ; but he can never do the will of God (acceptably) and not know it. The knowledge of God's will and our duty is necessary to the practice of it. The knowledge of our duty, and the practice of it, may be (and too often are) separated ; but the practice of religion, and doing what we know to be our duty, is the only way to true happiness. Learn thence, 1. That Christ doth not approve of a blind obedience in his people, but requires that their practice and obedience be founded upon understanding and knowledge. 2. That the first care of those that will be Christ's disciples and followers, must be this, with all seriousness to apply themselves to the knowledge of their Master's will. 3. That next to the knowledge of our duty, our first and chief care must be to practise every thing that we understand and know to be our duty. 4. That a right knowledge and practice of our duty will certainly make us happy : *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

18 I speak not of you all ; I know whom I have chosen : but that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

If the choosing spoken of here be understood of eternal election, a choosing to everlasting life, then it affords a strong argument to prove Christ to be God. Thus, he that is the author of eternal election, is God ; but Christ is such : *I know whom I have chosen.* Consider Christ as God, so we are chosen by him ; consider him as Mediator, and so we are chosen in him. If the choosing here be meant of choosing to the work of the apostleship, then our Saviour

tells his disciples, that it need not seem strange to them, that he chose one to be an apostle, who he knew would prove a traitor; for hereby that scripture prophecy, *Psal. xli. 9.* would be fulfilled: *He that cateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me*; which though it was literally spoken of Ahithophel's treachery against David, yet it was prophetically spoken of Judas's treason against Christ; and the expression of *lifting up the heel* is metaphorical, taken from a fed beast that kicks against his Master. Learn hence, That Christ did, as his followers do daily, suffer not only from open enemies, but from bosom and familiar friends. Lord! how many are there in the world, who by profession lift up their hand unto thee, who yet by treason and rebellion lift up their heel against thee.

19 Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*.

Here another argument occurs to prove the divinity of our blessed Saviour, from his foreknowledge of Judas's treason; the person who, the time when, and the place where, were all known to Christ: *I tell you before it come to pass.* The argument lies thus: "He that foresaw the future actions of men, and infallibly foreknew the future events and issues of things, is certainly God; but Christ did this, therefore he is really God." And he tells us here, That for this very reason he foretold now the treason of Judas: *Now I tell you before, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.* What *he* doth he mean? What he could foretell so many things to come, which did not depend upon necessary, but contingent causes only? This *he* was not a mere man surely, for he knows not what shall be on the morrow; but must be real God, because he knew all things not by revelation, as the prophets knew things to come, but by immediate inspection and simple intuition; so that we may say with Peter, *Lord, thou knowest all things*; and, because thou knowest all things, thou art God.

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

Lest his apostles should think, that for the treachery of one of them they should

all become odious and abominable to the whole world, our Saviour encourages and gives them assurance, That there should be those that would receive them, and that he would take it as kindly as if they had received himself: *He that receiveth you, receiveth me.* Learn hence, That it is a sweet encouragement to the ministers of Christ unto the faithful discharge of their duty, that Christ and the Father account that the respect paid to the ministers of the gospel is paid to themselves; and, on the contrary, that all the contempt cast upon them reflects upon themselves: *He that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.*

21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me. 22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

O what an astonishing word was this, *One shall betray me!* one of my disciples shall betray me! yea, one of you, my disciples and apostles, shall do it! Well might they look one upon another with sorrow and amazement, to hear that their Master should die; that he should die by treason, and that the traitor should be one of themselves; yet do they not censure one another, but suspect themselves, saying, *Master, is it I?* not, *Master, is it Judas?* Learn hence, 1. That it is possible for secret wickedness to lurk, yea, for the greatest villany to lodge, in the hearts of professors, in whose conversation appeareth nothing that may give just suspicion to others. Learn, 2. That it is both the duty and property of the disciples of Christ, to have so much candour and brotherly love, as not rashly to censure and judge one another, but to hope the best of others, and to fear the worst of themselves.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. 25 He then, lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it? 26 Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a

sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, *the son of Simon*. 27 And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. 28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. 29 For some of *them* thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. 30 He then having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night.

Observe here, 1. The character given of St. John the beloved disciple: he leaned on Christ's bosom: that is, he had most intimate converse with Christ, one whom Christ treated with greater freedom and familiarity than the rest, and one that knew more of his heart than most of his disciples. We commonly call a very near friend a *bosom friend*. Learn, That although Christ had an endeared love for his disciples and followers, yet there were degrees in Christ's own love, and he had a familiarity with some disciples beyond others, whilst he was here upon earth, even as now in heaven: though his heart be towards all his children here on earth, yet he is pleased to let out more kind manifestations of himself, and more sensible evidences of his love, towards some than towards others. John was the disciple that lay in Jesus's bosom. Observe, 2. The way which our Saviour took to discover Judas to the rest of his disciples, not by naming him, but by giving him a sop; partly because he would not give Judas any provocation by mentioning his name, and partly because this sign of eating the sop was most agreeable to the prophetic prediction, Psal. xli. 9. *Mine own familiar friend, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me*. Observe, 3. The time when Judas received the sop, and the consequence that followed upon his receiving of it; it was at that time when he had, with an unbelieving heart, and an unthankful spirit, been eating the passover, which was a type of Christ: *Now Satan enters into him*: that is, takes fuller possession of him, and he gives himself up more freely and fully

to the devil's conduct and suggestion. Satan gets possession of wicked men gradually and by degrees; not all at once. The only way to be safe, is to resist the beginnings of sin; for when Satan once gets footing, it is hard to prevent a more full possession. Observe, 4. The place where Judas now was; namely, at Bethany, some miles from Jerusalem, and it was now night; yet so intent he was upon the devil's work, that away he trudges to Jerusalem, and at that time of night repairs to the high priests, and sells his Saviour into their hands. O, what a warmth and zeal was here in the devil's cause! men given over by God, and possessed by Satan, are so restless and unwearied in sin, that neither by day nor by night can they cease from the contrivance and execution of it.

31 Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

Observe here, 1. Our blessed Lord calls his death his glory: *Now is the Son of man glorified*; that is, now is the time at hand when I am to die, and shall by my death finish the work of man's redemption, and thereby eminently glorify God. God the Father was eminently glorified in the obedience and sufferings of his dear and only Son. It is true that the sufferings of Christ were ignominious in themselves, yet were they the way to his own glory, and his Father's also; for by them he redeemed a lost world, trampled upon Satan, triumphed over sin; and the Father was exceedingly glorified by the Son's giving obedience to his will, and so cheerfully suffering. *Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him*.

33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and, as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

Observe here, An endearing compellation, a sweet title, given by Christ to his disciples, *Little children*; intimating that tender affection which he bears unto them, though now upon the point of departing from them. Learn thence, That what-



ever Christ's dealings are, or may be, with his people in respect of his removing and withdrawing from them, yet he still retains the relation of a Father to them, and will in his absence from them exercise such a care over them as parents have of their young and tender children; so much doth the title of *little children* imply and import. Observe farther, The plain intimation which our Saviour gives to his disciples of his death's being very nigh (for it was the very next day;) he tells them that he was going to heaven; *and whither he went, they could not come*: that is, not presently; they should follow him their Forerunner afterwards, but at present he had a great deal of work for them to do, though his own work was done; and till they had finished their work, *whither he went they could not come*. Learn hence, That though it be rest which the saints may lawfully desire, an everlasting rest with Christ in glory, yet must they not refuse to labour, whilst their Lord will have it so. Till their work be done, whither Christ is gone they cannot come: *Ye shall seek me; but whither I go, at present, ye cannot come*.

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Our Saviour having mentioned his departure from his disciples in the former verse; *I go away, and whither I go ye cannot come*; in this and the following verses, he gives them a strict charge that in his absence they should love one another. This he calls a *new commandment*: not that it was new in regard of institution, but of restitution; not new in regard to the substance of it, for it was a branch of the law of nature, and a known precept of the Jewish religion; but he calls it a new commandment, 1. Because purged from the old corrupt glosses of the Pharisees, who had limited this duty of love, and confined it to their own countrymen; whereas Christ enlarges the object, and obliges his disciples to love all mankind, even their very enemies. 2. Because this duty of love was so greatly advanced and heightened by our Saviour, as to the measure and degrees of it, even to the laying down of our lives for one another. 3. It is called a new commandment because urged from a new motive, and enforced by a new example: *As I have lov-*

*ed you, that ye also love one another*. Never was this duty so effectually taught, so mightily encouraged, so much urged and insisted upon, by any teacher, as our Saviour; and never was there such an example given of it as his own. 4. It is a new commandment, because with the rest it was never to wax old; but to be always fresh in the memory and practice of Christ's disciples to the end of the world.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

To recommend the foregoing duty, of loving one another, with the greater advantage, our Saviour tells us here that it will be the best evidence of our relation to him as sincere disciples: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples*. The disciples of John were known by the austerity of their lives: the disciples of the Pharisees by their habit and separation from other men. Christ will have his disciples known by their profound affection to each other, which in the primitive times was so conspicuous, that the very Heathens did cry and say out, See how the Christians love one another! Here observe, 1. Our Saviour doth not say, By this men shall conjecture and guess that you belong to me, as being my disciples; but they shall certainly know it. 2. He doth not say, By this shall you know yourselves to be my disciples, and one another to be so; but by this shall all others know it as well as yourselves. 3. He doth not say, By this shall all men know that ye look like my disciples; but that you are indeed what you pretend to be, namely, by your loving one another. 4. Christ doth not say, By this shall all the world know that you are my disciples, by your assembling often together in my house of prayer, by your frequent fastings, by your reading the scriptures daily, by your hearing sermons weekly, by your receiving sacraments monthly; all these, put together, will be no sufficient evidence of your discipleship, if you keep up a secret grudge in your hearts one towards another: but by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. Learn hence, That one of the best proofs and evidences we can have of our relation to Christ, as his sincere disciples, is a hearty love and good will one towards another.

36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus

answered him, Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. 37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. 38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice.

Here we find Peter reflecting upon what our Saviour had said just before, ver. 33. *Whither I go ye cannot come*: he is inquisitive to know of Christ whither he went. Our Lord tells him, that for the present he could not follow him, but should hereafter; he was not yet strong enough to suffer for him, as he should and did afterwards. St. Peter, grieved at this, rashly resolves to follow him, though he should die for his sake. Christ advises him not to be over confident of his strength and standing, for he should deny him thrice, within the time of cock-crowing. Observe here, 1. How that fond conceit, which our Lord's disciples had of his temporal kingdom here in this world, did abide and continue with them to the very last; for when Christ spake of leaving them, by ascending into heaven, Peter understands him of a removal that was earthly, from one place to another, whereas Christ intended it of a removal from earth to heaven. The opinion, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, and that his kingdom should be of this world, was so deeply rooted in the minds of the Jews, that they stumbled at it fatally; and Christ's own disciples had so drank in the notion, that they wondered to hear Christ say, that he was going from them, and that whither he goes they cannot come. Observe, 2. That Christ's disciples shall certainly follow their Master afterwards, and be for ever with the Lord; but they must wait their Lord's time, and finish their Lord's work: they must patiently wait for their change, and not peevishly wish for it: for, though they do not follow Christ presently to heaven, they shall follow him afterwards. Observe, 3. The greatness of St. Peter's confidence: *I will lay down my life for thy sake*. Good man! he resolved honestly, but too, too much in his own strength. Little, O little did he think, what a feather he should be in the wind of

temptation, if once God left him to the power and prevalency of his own fears! The holiest of men knows not his own strength till temptation brings him to the trial. Observe, lastly, how detestable St. Peter's presumption and self-confidence was to Christ, and how fatal and pernicious to himself: *Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?* as if Christ had said, "Peter, thou sayest more than thou canst do; thine own strength will fail thee, and thy self-confidence deceive thee; I know thy heart better than thou dost thyself; and I foresee that *before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice*." Thence learn, That none are so near falling as those that are most confident of their own standing.

#### CHAP. XIV.

**L**ET not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Our blessed Saviour in the foregoing chapter, having acquainted his disciples with his approaching death, by the treachery of Judas, their hearts were thereupon overwhelmed with grief and trouble. Accordingly, in this chapter, by sundry arguments he comforts his disciples against the perplexity of their fears and sorrows. Observe, 1. How Christ addresses himself to his disciples in a very endearing and affectionate manner: *Let not your heart be troubled*. Whence learn, 1. That the best and holiest of God's children and servants, whilst here in an imperfect state, are subject to desponding and disquieting and distrustful fears. 2. That no work is more delightful to our Saviour, than to comfort the troubled and perplexed spirits of his servants. Observe, 2. The remedy which Christ prescribes for the calming their present fears, and for arming them against future troubles, and that is, faith in the Father and in himself: *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*. Hence learn, 1. That God is the supreme object of faith; his unchangeable life and faithfulness, with his infinite power

in the accomplishing of his promise, is the security of believers. Learn, 2. That Christ, as Mediator between God and guilty creatures, is the immediate object of our faith. Learn, 3. That Christ's being the true and proper object of our faith, is a proof of his being truly and really God. Christ doth here assert his own deity in the substance of the command, in making himself an object of faith in conjunction with God the Father: *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Observe next, The arguments of consolation which Christ propounds for the support of his disciples under the sorrow which they had conceived for his approaching departure. 1. He tells them, That heaven, whither he was now going, was his Father's house, a place of happiness not designed for himself alone, but for many more to enjoy a perpetual rest and abode in, as in everlasting mansions: *In my Father's house are many mansions.* Heaven is God's house, in which he will freely converse with his domestics, his children and servants, and they shall enjoy full glory there, as in a quiet and capacious habitation. A second ground of comfort is, that he assures them, he will come again and receive them to himself, that they may live together with him in the heavenly mansions. This promise Christ makes good to his saints, partly at the day of their death, and perfectly at the day of judgment, when he shall make one errand for all, and take up all his children to himself, and make them completely happy, both in soul and body, with himself. Learn hence, That though Christ has removed his bodily presence from his friends on earth, yet his love to them is not ceased, nor will he rest satisfied till he and they meet again, eternally to solace themselves in each other's company: *I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.* A third argument for consolation is, that, notwithstanding Christ was to leave them, yet they knew whither he went, namely, to heaven, and which was the way thither: *Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.* It contributes much to the comfort of believers, as to know God and heaven, so to know the way that leads thither, that so they may be armed against all the difficulties of that way.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

Observe here, 1. How Thomas, and probably divers others of the apostles, notwithstanding all that Christ had said to the contrary, did still dream of a temporal kingdom, and supposed him to speak of some earthly palace which he was going to, and therefore he tells our Saviour, he knew not whither he was going: but Christ, meaning not a temporal, but a heavenly kingdom, tells them, that if they intended to follow him, and be with him in heaven, he himself was the only way thither: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life;* that is, I am the true and living way to the Father: and *no man cometh to the Father but by me;* that is, no man can have any access to God by prayer, or any other act of religious worship here on earth, or any access to God in heaven, but by me as Mediator. As if Christ had said, "I am the author of the way that leadeth unto life, the teacher of the truth which directs to it, and the giver of that life which is to be obtained by walking in it: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*"

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Observe here, 1. What a gross conception the apostles had, and St. Philip in particular, of the divine nature and being, as if God the Father could be seen with mortal eyes: *Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.* It is not easy to determine what

degrees of ignorance may consist with saving grace; doubtless, as the degrees of revelation and means of knowledge are more or less, so a person's ignorance is more or less excusable before God. Observe, 2. How meekly our blessed Saviour reproves their ignorance: *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* and then proceeds to instruct them in, and farther acquaints them with, the oneness of himself with the Father, and the personal union of the divine and human nature in himself. Learn hence, That the Father being invisible in his essence, to know or see him with mortal bodily eyes is impossible; but he was seen in his Son, who is the express image of the Father, being one in essence with him, and one in operation also: *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.*

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Here Christ gives his disciples a promise of enduing them with power after his departure, to work miracles in some respects greater than what he wrought himself; not greater in regard of the manner, for he wrought by his own power, and they wrought all in his name, but greater in regard of the matter of them; particularly, their speaking with strange tongues, their giving the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands, their healing diseases by the very shadow of their bodies, but especially by their wonderful conversion of the Gentiles from idolatry to serve the living God. When St. Peter converted three thousand at one sermon, then Christ made good this promise, the disciple at that time appeared to be above his Master; Christ all his time was angling for a few fishes, and caught but an hundred and twenty, *Acts i. 15.* whilst Peter comes with his drag-net, and catches three thousand at one cast. The reason might be, because Christ was not properly to be the builder, but the foundation itself. He subjoins the reason of all this: *Because I go unto my Father*: that is, to send down and pour forth upon you, my apostles, the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost; which was the great cause of the apostles' miraculous operations. Hence learn, That it pleased the wisdom of Christ to do greater things by the hand of his weak servants here in the

world, than he was pleased to do himself, who was God over all, blessed for evermore.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.  
14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

In these words our Saviour produces another argument to quiet his disciples' hearts under their perplexity and trouble for the loss of his bodily presence; he assures them, that whatever comforts they enjoyed by his presence, they shall obtain by their prayers. Observe here, 1. The qualification requisite in prayer: we must pray in *Christ's name*, that is, for the sake of his merits and mediation, in obedience to God's command, and with an eye to his glory, and for things agreeable to his will, and for things which his wisdom sees good for us. To pray in Christ's name, is more than to name Christ in prayer. It implies three things: 1. To look up unto Christ as having purchased for us this privilege, that we may pray; for it is by the blood of Christ, that we draw near to God, and that a throne of grace is open for us. 2. To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray in the strength of Christ and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit of Christ. 3. To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray in the virtue of the present mediation of Christ; believing that what we ask on earth, Christ obtains in heaven. To pray thus is no easy matter; yet unless we do pray thus, we do not pray at all. Observe, 2. The promise made to such prayers: *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.* He saith not, That will my Father do; but that will I do, to testify his divine power and oneness with the Father. This evidently proves him to be God. Observe, 3. The repetition of the promise for the further confirmation of it: *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* The promise is doubled for the confirmation of it, that so we might be free from all fears and doubts of being heard, when we put up our prayers to God, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, for things agreeable to his will. Learn hence, That although the children of God have sometimes many jealousies and fears arising in their mind concerning the answer of their prayers, yet they are altogether groundless; for it is most certain their desires shall be granted them, so far as the wisdom of God sees fit and convenient for them; and for that

reason our Saviour redoubles the promise, *If ye will ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

In these words our Saviour implicitly reproves his disciples for their fond way of expressing their love to him, by doting upon his bodily presence, and sorrowing immoderately for his absence, and he expressly warns them to evidence their love to him by their obedience to his commands: *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Where observe, Christ requires an obedient love, and loving obedience. Love without obedience is but dissimulation; obedience without love, is but drudgery and slavery. Such a love as produces obedience, must be a dutiful love; a love of reverence and honour to him as a commander, and an operative and working love, a labour of love, as the apostle calls it: not waiters, but workers, are the best servants in Christ's esteem. And such an obedience as is the product of love, will be a willing, easy, and cheerful obedience, a pleasing and an acceptable obedience, a constant and abiding obedience; all other motives without love are servile and base, and beget in us the drudgery of a slave, but not the duty of a son. He that fears God only, is afraid of smarting; but he that loves God is afraid of offending. Learn hence, That the best and surest evidence we can have of our love to the Lord Jesus Christ, is an humble, cheerful, universal, and persevering obedience to his commands: *Keep my commandments*; that is, endeavour it without reserve; for though we cannot keep the commandments to a just satisfaction, yet we may perform them to a gracious acceptance. And the word *my*, my commandments, is a sweetening and alleviating word. Moses' law, an unsupportable load; but Christ's law an easy burden. The law from Sinai, dreadful; the law from Sion, gracious; it pardons weakness, and accepts sincerity.

16 *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;* 17 *Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

Christ comforteth his disciples here, with a promise of the mission of the Holy Spirit, to supply the want of his bodily presence. Where observe, 1. The procurer of this blessing, and that is Christ, by his prevailing prayer, and powerful intercession: *I will pray.* It runs in the future tense; and so it is a promise of Christ's continual intercession. As long as Christ is in heaven, a christian shall not want a supply of comfort and consolation here on earth. Observe, 2. The author and donor of the blessing, and that is God himself: *I will pray the Father, and he shall give.* The Father, that is, my Father, your Father, and he that is the Father of comfort and consolation: *I will pray, and he will give.* It is an expression of great assurance. Observe, 3. The blessing itself, the Holy Ghost, called here *another comforter*. Where note, 1. The divinity of the Holy Ghost; he that will supply the comforts of Christ's presence, must be as Christ is, the God of all comfort. Note, 2. The person of the Holy Ghost: he is a divine person, not a divine quality or operation; then we might call him a Comfort, but not a Comforter. Note, 3. The office and employment of the Holy Ghost: *He is a Comforter*; that is, an advocate, and intercessor to sue for us; an encourager, and one that administers consolation to us; and as he is an holy Spirit, so are his comforts holy comforts. Observe, 4. The stability of this blessing: *That he may abide with you for ever.* The best of our outward comforts are sudden flashes, not lasting flames; but the consolations of the Holy Spirit are strong consolations, they are abounding consolations, and everlasting consolations; especially the Holy Spirit will be the comforter of good men in the day of affliction, in the day of temptation, and at the hour of death, when all other comforts flag and fail. Observe lastly, The additional title given to the Holy Ghost, he is called *the Spirit of truth*: partly in opposition to Satan, who is called a lying spirit; partly because he teacheth and revealeth the truth, leadeth his people into all truth, and sealeth and confirmeth truth to the souls of believers; he is the Spirit of truth, both in his essence and in his operations. Learn hence, That as the Holy Spirit is true in his essence and nature, so is he true in his office as a comforter to good men: all his consolations being real and solid, and free from imposture and delusion.

18 I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you.

Here observe, 1. The condition which the disciples were in upon the account of Christ's removal from them, and that was, sad and comfortless, fatherless or orphans, as the word signifies. Learn hence, That Christ's departure, or the loss of his gracious presence, is very sad and comfortless to a pious soul ; well might the disciples here lament and mourn, upon the occasion of Christ's leaving of them, seeing thereby they should be deprived of his doctrine and instructions, of his advice and counsel, and of the benefit of his holy and instructive example. Observe, 2. The care of Christ for his disciples, in reference to this their sad and disconsolate condition : *He would not leave them comfortless.* Where note, He doth not say, I will not suffer you to be comfortless, but I will not leave you so : that is, he will not desert or disown them in their comfortless condition ; he will not leave them, either in point of affection, or in point of activity : he will not cease to love them, nor cease to bestir himself for them. Learn hence, That Christ will not leave his friends in a sad and comfortless state and condition, though for a time they may be brought into it : *I will not leave you comfortless. I will come unto you.* Christ's coming here unto them, is to be understood of his coming to them by his Holy Spirit ; in the gifts of it, in the graces of it, and in the comforts of it ; thus he did not long leave them comfortless, but at the feast of Pentecost came to them again.

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more ; but ye see me : because I live, ye shall live also.  
20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

Here our Saviour foretells his approaching death, that within a little time the men of the world should see him no more ; for though he rose again, the world saw him no more after his death ; for we read of no appearance of him after his resurrection to any, but to his disciples only. Indeed the hour is coming when the world shall see him again ; namely, at the day of judgment, when every eye shall behold him with terror and amazement. Observe farther, The consolation given to his disciples, *Ye shall see me ; and because I*

*live, ye shall live also.* Because I am raised from the grave, I will quicken your dead bodies in the grave, and ye shall live also ; and as I live by my ascension into heaven, so shall you my disciples live a life of grace here, and a life of glory with myself hereafter. Learn hence, That a believer's spiritual life is derived from Christ, who by his Spirit communicates a quickening virtue to all his members : *Because he lives, ye shall live also.* See how Christ binds up their life together with his own ! As if he had said, " Whilst there is vital sap in the root, you that are branches in me shall not wither and die." Observe lastly, A farther privilege insured to believers after Christ's ascension, and the Spirit's mission ; they should more perfectly understand the essential union betwixt Christ and his Father, and the mystical union betwixt Christ and his members : *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, &c.* The knowledge which the saints now have of the mysterious and mystical union, is but dark and imperfect ; but in heaven they shall understand these things clearly : then and there the essential union of Christ and his Father, and the mystical union between Christ and believers, will be more clearly understood, than we are capable to understand them in this our imperfect state.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father ; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Our blessed Saviour in these words repeats what he had before enjoined at ver. 15. namely, to evidence the sincerity of our love to him by the universality of our obedience to his commands : *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* Where note, 1. The necessity of knowledge in order unto practice. 2. The necessity of practice in order unto happiness. We must first have Christ's commandments, before we can keep them ; we must have them in our understandings and judgments, in our wills and affections ; not have them only in our eyes to read, in our ears to hear, or in our mouths to talk of them, but to hide them in our hearts, that we may not sin against Christ, in the wilful violation of them. Farther, we must keep, as well as have, these commandments. This denotes an universal, diligent, and pene-

vering obedience to them. Hence learn, That although many loose professors pretend love to Christ, because they hear, read, know, and can talk of his commandments; yet in Christ's account none do truly love him, but those who make conscience of their obedience to him: *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* Observe next, The gracious promise of Christ to such as thus express their love unto him. 1. *He shall be loved of my Father, and of myself.* And shall he not be loved of the Holy Ghost too? Yes, no doubt. But why is he not named then? Because the Son dwelleth in us by the Spirit, and sheds his love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. 2. *I will manifest myself unto him*; that is, such obedient christians shall not only enjoy the fruit and benefit of my love, but they shall enjoy the sense of my love, and experience the sensible manifestations and inward diffusions of my love in their own souls. Learn hence, That the only way to have Christ love us, and to let out his love upon us, and to know that he loves us, is to look diligently to our obediential walking with him and before him. We may as rationally think to nourish our bodies with poison, as to enjoy the manifestation of Christ's love in a way of sin.

22 Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

Some understand these words of a temporal manifestation, and think that Judas the brother of James, who spake them, still expected that Christ should be a temporal prince, and have such a kingdom as should be conspicuous to all the world, and therefore puts the question, how he could possibly show himself to his disciples, and the world not see him? Others understand it of a spiritual manifestation; as if he had said, "Lord! who or what are thy disciples, that we should enjoy more special manifestations of thy love to us, than to the rest of the world? Why should we be dignified by such distinguishing favours above others?" Learn hence, 1. That there is a real difference put by Christ betwixt his own children and the world, in the matter of special manifestations. 2. That there being no cause from the creature why Christ should make this difference, his discriminating grace is matter of just

and great admiration. Well might the apostle, out of a deep admiration, say, *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?*

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24 He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear, is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

Observe here, How our Saviour still goes on to direct and encourage his disciples to evidence the sincerity of their love to his person, by the universality of their obedience to his commands: and tells them how great their advantage would be by so doing. For, First, *The Father would love them*; that is, manifest his favour to them in farther dispensations of grace and comfort. Learn thence, That all the manifestations of divine love to the souls of believers, depend upon their close walking with God in the paths of holiness and strict obedience. Secondly, *We will make our abode with him.* He shall have Father and Son's company. An allusion to a parent that has many children; he will be sure to live with them that are most dutiful to him, and most observant of him. The expression of *making their abode with us*, denotes that sweet and intimate fellowship which shall be betwixt God and us, and the perpetuity and constancy of it at all times; till we are taken up by him into heaven, he will make this abode with us, by the indwelling presence of his Holy Spirit, the graces and comforts whereof shall abide with us for ever.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. 26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Here we have a repeated promise of the mission of the Holy Ghost, called *The Comforter*, and his special office declared; namely, to teach, and to bring to remembrance what Christ had taught: *He shall teach you all things.* As the Spirit of

God is a great comforter, so he is the special teacher of his children; he teacheth condescendingly, stooping to the meanest capacities; he teacheth efficaciously, inclining the heart to receive instruction, as well as opening the ear to hear it; he teacheth plainly and clearly, unerringly and infallibly; he is truth itself, and therefore his teachings are most true. And as the Holy Spirit is the saints' teacher, so is he also their remembrancer: *He shall bring all things to your remembrance*; that is, all truths needful to be known, and necessary to salvation. Here note, That the Holy Spirit teaches nothing but what Christ himself taught; the Spirit teaches in the word, and by the word, but never teaches any thing contrary to the word: *He shall teach and bring to remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.*

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

As if our Lord had said, "Whatever outward trouble the world gives you, be not afraid of it before it comes, nor troubled at it when it is come, for I will give you inward peace in the midst of all your outward troubles: *Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" Where note, That Christ's peace is vastly different from that peace which is given or enjoyed by the world: the world may wish peace yet never obtain it; or they may wish it, yet not be able to give it; but Christ's peace is real and effectual, solid and substantial; the world's peace is only a freedom from outward trouble, but Christ's peace is a deliverance from inward guilt: and though it doth not give us an exemption from outward troubles, yet it gives us a sanctified use and improvement of them, and assures us of a joyful issue and deliverance out of them.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

That the disciples of Christ might neither be overset with fears, nor overwhelmed with grief, he tells them, that they ought

to entertain the news of his departure rather with joy and exultation, than with sorrow and dejection; *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father.* True love to Christ will make us rejoice in his advancement and exaltation, although it be our own disadvantage. These words, *My Father is greater than I*, must be understood with reference to his human nature as Mediator; for so he was the Father's servant, and the Father, as God, was greater than he, as man. Again, the Father may be said to be greater than Christ, in regard of his paternity, as being the fountain of the deity; the Father is of himself, but the Son is begotten of the Father: but being of the same substance with the Father, he is consequently God, as the Father is God; for the inequality arises not from the essence, but from the order and manner of subsistence. Thus *the Father is greater than he*; Greater than he as to his original, the Son being begotten by him; and greater is he that gives, than he that receives; but, as to his essence, they are both one God, and so equal. Three ways the Father was greater than Christ: 1. With respect to his human nature. Who can doubt but a dependent is inferior to that Almighty Being that made him? 2. With respect to the eternal generation of his divine Person; as he was begotten of the Father, who is therefore called the fountain of the deity. 3. With respect to his office as Mediator, for thus he was the Father's servant. O wonderful condescension! that the eternal Word, who, as such, was equal with the Father, should, in compassion to us, accept a station, and sustain a character, in which the Father was greater than he! Now, though under each of these considerations God the Father is greater than the Son, yet none of them are inconsistent with the Son's being God by nature.

29 And now I have told you before it come to pass; that when it is come to pass, ye might believe. 30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

The time of our Saviour's death now nearer and nearer approaching, he prepares the expectation of his disciples for it, be-



cause evils that surprise us suddenly, do sink our spirits sadly; whereas what we fear, for that we prepare. Accordingly our Lord arms his disciples against all disquietude, and overwhelming sorrow for his departure from them: *I have told you before, that when it comes to pass, ye might believe*; that is, Be assured that I am not mere man, but truly and really God, and depend upon me for life and salvation. Observe, 2. How our Saviour points out the cause of his suffering; namely, Satan, and his instruments: *The prince of this world cometh*; that is, by Judas, the soldiers, and the high priests: *but he hath nothing in me*: that is, "He will find no sin or corruption in me to side with his temptation, or no guilt upon me to give him any advantage against me, for I shall die as a perfectly innocent person." Christ, in suffering for our sins, did not only conflict with the wrath of God, but with the rage of men and devils; yet all the power and policy, all the malice and cruelty of Satan, cannot prevail against Christ, any farther than he voluntarily yields and submits himself unto it: *The prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in me*. Observe, 3. That it was Christ's love and obedience to his Father, that carried him forth so cheerfully to the work of sufferings, supported him under it, and carried him through it: *That the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do*. True love to God will draw all men to obedience in the hardest service and sufferings; the grand motive of Christ's sufferings was love to his Father, obedience to his commands, and a regard to his glory. Lord, let thy love and obedience to thy Father, in all thy sufferings, be the subject of our admiration, and the matter of our imitation also. As the Father gives us commandment, so let us always do.

## CHAP. XV.

**I** AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Observe here, How our blessed Saviour, under the metaphor of a vine, elegantly sets forth himself in his relation to his visible church, showing under that similitude what

his Father meant to do with Judas, and with all unfruitful branches like unto him, even take them away, cut them off, and throw them into the fire; but such as are fruitful, he purges by his word and Spirit, by ordinances and providences, by mercies and afflictions, that they may be more abundantly and abidingly fruitful. Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ in his office for, and relation to, his people, doth most fitly resemble a vine. As the vine is weak, mean, and small in outward appearance, not like the cedar for height, or like the oak for strength; so was Christ in his state of humiliation; there was no beauty in him, *Is. liii*. As the vine is a fruitful plant though it has little pomp, yet it has much plenty, and is only useful for fruit-bearing, and brings forth both plenty and variety of sweet fruit to make glad the heart of man: thus the fruits of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, are many and great, delightful and sweet. In a word, as the fruit of the vine is pressed, that it may be drink unto men, so Christ submitted to be trod in the wine-press of God's wrath, that thereby the sweetest fruit and benefit might redound to his people. Finally, as the vine is the root from which all the branches derive their nourishment and fruitfulness; in like manner is Christ the stock into which all his members are ingrafted, the root in which they all subsist, and the fountain from whence their spiritual life and fruitfulness doth proceed and flow. Learn, 2. That as Christ is the Vine, so his Father is the Husbandman: he ingrafts and implants all the branches into this vine; the plants of righteousness are of his own planting; he takes notice what store of fruit every branch doth bring forth; and it is his daily care to dress and dung, to purge and prune, to support and shelter, his vineyard, that it may bring forth fruit abundantly. Learn, 3. That there are two sorts of branches in this vine, some fruitful, others unfruitful; some have the visibility, but not the reality of branches; some are branches only by external profession, others are so by real implantation. Learn, 4. That the true touchstone whereby to discern one sort of branches from another, is not by the fair leaves of profession, but by the substantial proofs of an holy and righteous conversation. Learn, 5. That in the most fruitful branches, in the best and holiest christians, there remains much corruption to be purged out, in order to future and farther fruit.

fulsome. Learn, 6. That the Husbandman's hand (God the Father's) manages the pruning-knife of affliction, in order to his people's improvement in grace and holiness; he had rather see his vine bleed, than see it barren. Lastly, That such branches as, after all the Husbandman's care and cost, remain unfruitful, shall be finally cut off, and cast away, as was Judas here; who, in this discourse of our Saviour, seems particularly and especially to be aimed at: he was a branch in him that bare no fruit, who was shortly after taken away, and went to his own place.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Our Saviour having in the former verses distinguished his disciples into two sorts: some that were members of his body the church, and branches of him the true Vine, by outward show and visible profession only; others that are spiritually ingrafted into him, and do bring forth much fruit. Now in this third verse Christ tells his disciples which number they were of: Now, saith he, ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you; that is, now that Judas the traitor, that dead, rotten, fruitless branch, is cut off and cast out, ye are all clean through the cleansing power and virtue of my word and doctrine. Learn hence, 1. That such as are justified by the blood, and sanctified by the Spirit, of Christ, are in Christ's account clean, notwithstanding their many spots and manifold imperfections: *Now are ye clean.* 2. That as the blood of Christ is the meritorious, and the Spirit of Christ the efficacious, so the word of Christ is the instrumental, cause of a believer's purification and cleansing: *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I will abide in you.* That is, abide in me not only by an outward and visible profession, but by a real fiducial adherence, and I will abide in you by the influences and operations of my Holy Spirit.

The union and conjunction between Christ and his members is mutual: they abide in him by faith and dependence, and he abideth in them by the indwelling presence of his grace and Spirit: *Abide in me, and I will abide in you.* Observe farther, The reason which Christ gives, why they should thus abide in him: because without union with him, without interest in him, without influences of grace derived from him, they could bring forth no fruit for him, nor do any thing that is truly acceptable and well-pleasing to him: *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me ye can do nothing:* that is, "As branches severed from the vine cannot live and bear fruit, so neither can christians separated from Christ, and without deriving virtue from him, do any thing spiritually good and well-pleasing in the sight of God."—Learn hence, That not only unregenerate men do labour under an impotency to have that which is spiritually good, but even disciples themselves, without daily dependence upon Christ, and without constant communications of grace from him, can do nothing in a lively and acceptable way and manner unto him: *Without me ye can do nothing;* you that are branches of me the true Vine. As christians, without me, that is, without my Spirit, abiding in you, and uniting you to me your head, you can do nothing acceptable to me, or worthy of my gospel. Again, as apostles, it may denote, that, without the gifts and powerful assistance of the Holy Spirit, they could do nothing to convert the world to christianity. In both respects might Christ truly say, *Without me ye can do nothing.*

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Here our holy Lord discovers the sad and deplorable condition of such professors, who, pretending relation to Christ, do yet bring forth no fruit unto him; he calls them withered branches, fit only for the fire. Learn hence, That such as have had a long standing in God's vineyard, and contented themselves with a withered profession, are in great danger of having God's blasting added to their barrenness. All their parts, and gifts, and common graces, will wither, and their fair blossoms of profession will drop off, and at the great day the angels

will gather these fruitless branches together, and cast them into hell fire.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Observe here, 1. A glorious privilege declared: *Ask what ye will, it shall be done unto you.* Not that we are hereby warranted to ask what we please at God's hand, but our will must be limited by the word and will of God; we must pray in faith, and in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, and with a single eye to the glory of God. Observe, 2. The condition upon which this privilege is attainable: *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,* that is, practically and experimentally. If my doctrine and commands abide in your hearts, and dispose you to an holy fruitfulness in your lives, then shall all your just requests be granted. Learn, That such as by faith embrace the promises, and by obedience live up to the precepts of the gospel, may in prayer humbly ask of God what they will, with a due submission to the wisdom and will of God.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Our Lord here exhorts his followers to an holy fruitfulness in good works, by a double argument. One drawn from the glory of God: *Herein is my Father glorified.* The other from their own advantage; *So shall ye be my disciples;* that is, hereby ye shall evidence and prove yourselves to be my disciples. Learn hence, That a christian's abounding fruitfulness in good works will abundantly conduce to the honour and glory of God, and also to his own peace and comfort, by being the best evidence of his discipleship.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love.

Lord, what a comparison is here! As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. He doth not say, As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved him; but, so have I loved you. Nor doth he say, As God hath loved me, so have I loved you; but, *As the Father.* It is *verbum dilectionis*, a word importing dearness of

affection. Nor doth he say, The Father hath loved me, and I love you; but, *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.* Nor doth he say, As the Father hath loved me, so will I love you; but *so have I loved you.* This shows the priority of Christ's love, that he loved us first, and also denotes the invincible constancy of his love, and the indubitable certainty thereof; *I have loved you.* Follow me from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven again, and you will find that every step I have taken hath been in love. Learn, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ hath given full and ample demonstration of his great and wonderful love unto his church and people. 2. That it is the duty, and ought to be the singular care, of every christian, to preserve the sweet sense and inward diffusions of Christ's love in their own souls: *Continue ye in my love.*

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Christ had told his disciples in the foregoing verse, that he had *loved them, even as the Father had loved him;* that is, with an eternal love, with a real and operative love, with an immutable and constant love. In this verse he directs them how they may continue in the sense of his love; namely, by their constant obedience to his commands, as his obedience to his Father's commands had secured him a continuance in his Father's love: *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;* that is, in the sense of my love, and under the sweet apprehensions of it. Learn hence, That as our obedience to Christ is the best evidence of our love to him, so is it the best means to preserve and keep us in the sense and assurance of his love to us.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

In these words our Saviour declares the ground and reason why he did so earnestly press and urge the duty of being universally fruitful upon his disciples, and that was two-fold. 1. *That his joy might remain in them;* that is, That the joy which he had in their holiness and obedience might remain with him: nothing is more desired by Christ, than that he may have cause

continually to rejoice in the faith and fruitfulness of his people. 2. *That their joy in him might be full.* This latter arises from the former; our joy in Christ results from Christ's joy in us: his delight in us causes us abundantly to delight in him. Learn hence, That nothing is more desired by Christ, than that the joy of his people should be a full, solid, constant, and uninterrupted joy. 3. That the only way and mean, in order thereunto, is by an holy fruitfulness in good works: *All these things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* The observation of God's commandments does give a christian here the fullest and most perfect joy.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Our Lord had often, in this farewell sermon of his to his dear disciples, pressed upon them the duty of loving one another, chap. xiii. and xiv. And yet here he enforces it again from his own example: *As I have loved you, so love you one another; that is, as truly and as sincerely for the manner, though not the same proportion and degree.* Learn hence, That for the disciples of Christ to love one another upon such grounds, and in such a way as he loved them, is that which his heart greatly desires, and is very much set upon. 2. That Christ's love unto believers is both an obligation unto mutual love, and also a pattern and example for it: *This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.*

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Here our Saviour gives his disciples an evidence of the greatness of his love unto them; namely, in his readiness to lay down his life for them, which is the highest expression of love to our dearest friends, because life is the greatest earthly blessing. Learn hence, That Christ's love in laying down his life for his people, was a matchless love; for, whilst they were enemies to him, he had a friendly respect for them; and never ceased till he had brought them into a covenant of friendship with himself.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Here Christ invited his people to obedi-

ence, by the honourable title of friends: *Ye are my friends.* 1. Actively, you will declare and manifest yourselves to be my friends. 2. Passively, I will declare myself to be your friend. Learn hence, 1. How condescending is the love of Christ, in calling his servants by the name of friends. 2. How glorious is the believer's relation to Christ, in being one of his friends. 3. How grateful is obedience to Christ, seeing it dignifies the practisers of it with the title of his friends. 4. Our conformity to Christ consists not so much in imitation of what he did, as in obedience to what he prescribed. Some actions of Christ are inimitable, but all his commands are obeyable. 5. That nothing short of an humble, uniform, cheerful, and constant obedience to the commands of Christ, will evidence the truth of our relation to him, and the sincerity of our friendship with him: Then only are you my friends, *when you do whatsoever I command you.*

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

By these words Christ declares the reason why he was pleased to change his style, and call his disciples friends instead of servants; namely, because of his communication of secrets to them, which servants are not admitted to the knowledge of: *Henceforth I call you not servants:* that is, not mere servants; not that they were to be exempted from obedience, (for that is called for in the foregoing verse,) but Christ treated them now with the kindness and familiarity of friends; being about to leave them, he unbooms himself unto them, saying, *All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.* Not as if Christ had communicated the infinite treasures of knowledge to them, which the Father had imparted to him; but he speaks here as the prophet of his church, that as such he had revealed all things needful for them to know in order to salvation, all things belonging to their case and state: as a counsellor doth not impart all his knowledge to his client; but all that is necessary for his client to understand and know, that he makes known unto him relating to his own case. Learn hence, 1. That all Christ's disciples are his

servants, and all his servants are his friends, in regard of intimate communion and tender usage : *Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends.* And after his resurrection he called them brethren, *John xx.* 17. The dignity of believers is a growing dignity ; the longer they follow Christ, the higher privileges are indulged to them. Learn, 2. That all the Father's counsel concerning our salvation, and so far as it is needful and necessary for us to know, is faithfully revealed by Christ to his church, he being constituted by God the Father to be the great Prophet and Instructor of it : *All things that I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you :* that is, all things fit for them at present to know ; namely, concerning his passion, resurrection, ascension, mission of the Holy Ghost, a future judgment, and the promise of eternal life.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that your fruit should remain ;* that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Here our Saviour gives another instance and evidence of his love to his disciples ; he tells them, that his mercy and free goodness had prevented them in their election to eternal salvation, and in their vocation unto the office of apostleship : *Ye have not chosen me* to be your Master and Lord, *but I have chosen you* to be my disciples, friends, and servants. 2. He acquaints them with the end, design, and intention of his choosing of them ; namely, that they should bring forth fruit, and persevere therein, even in all the fruits of holiness and obedience, which are to the praise and glory of God by Jesus Christ ; *I have ordained you, that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.* 3. He directs them, that in order to their being fruitful, they should have access to the Father through him, for whatever they wanted and stood in need of ; *Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you.* Learn hence, That all those whom God hath chosen, and called to the knowledge and service of Jesus Christ, ought to make it their care and endeavour to bring forth fruit, and to persevere therein to their lives' end : *I have chosen you, that ye*

*should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another. 18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own : but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you : if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Observe here, 1. With what frequency and importunity our Lord inculcates and presses the duty of mutual love upon his disciples : *I command you to love one another.* It denotes the great importance of the duty, and the great averseness and backwardness of our hearts to the performance of it. And if we consider the disciples as apostles and ministers of the gospel, it intimates to us the necessity of mutual love amongst the dispensers of the gospel, as conducting exceedingly to the welfare and benefit of the church of God, over which he hath set them. Observe, 2. The argument which our Saviour makes use of to press his disciples in general, and his ministers and ambassadors in particular, to love each other, and that is, because the world would certainly hate them. Learn hence, That the world's hatred of the members and ministers of Christ, is, and ought to be, esteemed by them a strong argument to excite and persuade them to love one another ; for this is subjoined as an argument to press mutual love, that we are sure to meet with the world's hatred. Observe, 3. The several arguments by way of encouragement which Christ propounds to comfort his members and ministers against the world's hatred. The first argument is taken from his own lot and usage ; when here, in the world, he met with the very same before them : *The world hated me, before it hated you.* Learn hence, That hatred and persecution

from the world need not seem hard to the saints, if they consider what a stock Christ had before them upon him; he is a prime object of the world's hatred, and they who hate him much, do hate his members more, because of their likeness to him, and resemblance of him. A second argument of comfort under the world's hatred, is this, that it will evidence they are not of the world, but chosen out of the world, ver. 19. *Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* Learn hence, 1. That the children of God, though in the world, yet they are not of the world, they have not the spirit of the world in them, nor is the conversation of the world led by them. 2. That the difference betwixt them that are of the world, and those that are chosen out of the world, is of God's making: *I have chosen you out of the world.* 3. That such christians as are separated from the world in judgment, affection, and practice, must for that reason expect to be hated and persecuted by the world: *Because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hates you.* The third argument for consolation and support under the world's hatred, is taken from our relation to Christ as servants to a master, ver. 23. *Remember that the servant is not greater than his lord:* as if Christ had said, Is it equal, that you should expect better treatment than myself, either as to your person or ministry, or that you should expect that the world should better receive your doctrine than it did mine before you? Learn hence, That neither the members nor ministers of Christ can nor ought to expect better entertainment in and from the world than their Master found before them: *The servant is not above his master, nor greater than his lord.* A fourth argument to support them under the burden of the world's hatred, is taken from the goodness of the cause for which they were to suffer; namely, for Christ's name's sake, ver. 21. *All these things will they do unto you for my name's sake.* Hence learn, That it is the duty of all, but especially the ministers of Christ, to own the name of Christ, to stand up in defence of his name and truth, his glory and honour, what opposition soever they meet with for the same. Learn, 2. That the great quarrel of the world against the disciples of Christ, is for the name of Christ; whatever may be pretended, this is the ground of the quarrel.

22 If I had not come and spoken

unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

These words are not to be understood absolutely, but comparatively; as if Christ had said, "Had I not come amongst them in my incarnation, and preached personally to them the doctrine of salvation, and confirmed that doctrine by miraculous operations, they might have pleaded ignorance in some measure, and *they had not had sin*: that is, they had not had the sin of unbelief and gospel contempt to answer for, or had not had so great a measure of any kind of sin to answer for, as now they have; but would have more to say in excuse, or for a cover for their sin, than now they can: *But now they have no cloak for their sin*: that is, they are totally inexcusable, and have not the least colour or pretence for their obstinate unbelief." Learn hence, 1. That sins of ignorance are, as it were, no sins, compared with sins committed against light and knowledge. 2. That sins committed against gospel light are of an heinous nature, and aggravated guilt, as being committed against the very remedy. 3. That the gospel, where it is plainly preached, doth take away all pretence and excuse from sinners: *Now they have no cloak for their sin.*

23 He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the world might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

These words declare the heinous nature of the Pharisees' sin, in hating and persecuting Christ, who had done before their eyes such works as no man besides him, or before him, ever did; he acting by his own power. Peter healed the lame man, *Acts* iii. but it was in the name of Jesus of Nazareth; but Christ healed the sick and raised the dead in his own name, and by a special word of command: *I say unto thee, Arise.* Yet did the Pharisees hate him and his Father, according to the prediction, *Psalms* xxxv. 19. *They hated me without a cause.* Which being spoken of David in a type, received a more eminent

accomplishment in Christ, the Son of David. Learn thence, 1. That let men pretend to never so much holiness or respect to God, yet if they hate Christ, and despise his gospel, they are haters of God, who is one in essence and nature with his Son: *He that hateth me, hateth my Father also.* Learn, 2. That no miracles wrought by mortal men were ever comparable with the miracles by Christ the Son of God; his did surpass them all in number, kind, and manner of doing them; by his own authority, in his own name, and not as others, who obtained their power by prayer from God: *I have done amongst them the words which none other man did.* Learn, 3. That Christ, having confirmed his doctrine by such unparalleled miracles as the world was never before acquainted with, doth aggravate the sin of those that are haters of his person, despisers of his doctrine, and reproachers of his miracles: it being just with God, when men obstinately will shut their eyes and will not see, judicially to close their eyes and say, *They shall not see.*

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even the Spirit of truth*, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: 27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Here our holy Lord comforts himself, that, though he had laid them under many aspersions and scandals from the world, yet all these should be done away by the coming of the Holy Spirit, who should testify of him, and make his person and doctrine to be acknowledged in the world; and that they themselves should bear witness of him, who had been with him from the beginning; that is, since he first began to exercise his prophetic office. Observe here, 1. That Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three distinct persons in the Godhead. 2. That the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son: here the Son is said to send him; and, as to the Father, he is said to proceed from him. If the Holy Ghost doth not proceed from the Son, why is he called *The Spirit of the Son*? Gal. iv. 6. Why is he here called to be sent by the Son? *The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father.* And if the Spirit doth not proceed from the Son, what personal relation can we conceive be-

twixt the Son and the Spirit? Observe, 3. That it is the highest dignity and honour of the apostles, and ministers of Christ, that the Spirit beareth no testimony unto Christ, but with and according to the testimony given by them; for here it is conjoined, *He shall testify of me; and ye shall also bear witness, who have been with me from the beginning.*

#### CHAP. XVI.

**THESE** things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. 2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. 4 But these things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, our blessed Saviour had acquainted his disciples with the hatred and hard usage which they were like to meet with in the world, and here he intimates to them the reason why he did so much insist upon that subject: namely, not to sadden their hearts, and grieve their spirits, before their sufferings came, but that they might not be *offended*, discouraged, or scandalized at them, when they came, but prepared for them, and armed against them. Hence learn, 1. That all afflictions, but especially persecutions, are so searching and trying, that the best of christians have need to be guarded against them, that they may not be offended at them. 2. That it was the great design of Christ to arm his disciples against the scandal of the cross, lest, stumbling at what they expected not, they should fall from the profession of christianity. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.* Observe, 2. How our Saviour instances in two particular sorts and kinds of sufferings, which his disciples were to expect in the world, and from the world; namely, excommunication and martyrdom, ver. 2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues:* that is, exclude them from all their assemblies, both civil and religious, and shall not only

think it lawful, but a very acceptable service to God, to put them to death: *Whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service.* Observe, 3. How Christ discovers to his dear disciples the cause and ground of the world's hatred against them, and enmity towards them; namely, their ignorance of the Father and of himself, ver. 3. *These things will they do, because they have not known the Father nor me.* From whence we may learn, That all the persecutions of the saints do speak in persecutors an ignorance both of God the Father and of Jesus Christ his Son. All persecution springs from ignorance as well as from malice. And men, who continue ignorant of God and Christ, are in danger of turning persecutors, if they have a temptation to it. Observe, 4. How our Lord again forewarns his disciples of their approaching sufferings, to the intent that they might remember that he had foretold them of them, and would not fail to support them under them. He had often told them in general of persecutions and troubles which they must expect to meet with, but did not till now intimate the kinds and degrees of those sufferings, with respect to their weakness; and because whilst he was with them, he himself bore the brunt of all, the world's rage falling upon him, letting them alone; but after his ascension, when the malice of Satan and wicked men could not reach him, then did the storm fall upon them. Learn hence, 1. That Christ is so tender of his disciples' weakness, that he will not put them upon the hardship of sufferings, till they be trained up and prepared for them. 2. That it may encourage the saints in and under their sufferings, that Christ himself is the great object of the persecutors' malice, and they only so for his sake; for, could they reach him, they would not concern themselves with them. Learn, 3. That the saints of God, after long exemption and freedom from sufferings, must expect that storms will arise, clouds gather thick, and trials come on apace; and their being under one trial will not hide or shelter them from another.

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? 6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

Observe here, How our Saviour again intimates to his disciples his speedy depar-

ture from them, and reproves them for being so saddened at it, and concerned for it, without considering the end and design of it, and the benefit and advantage they were to receive by it. Here we see how the disciples' thoughts were wholly taken up about themselves, what they should do for want of Christ's bodily presence, without being instant with him, to know whether he was going, and what benefit he should reap, and they might expect, from his departure. Learn hence, That Christ's disciples ought not so much to have lamented the loss of his bodily presence, as to have rejoiced in his glorious exaltation, and in their advantages by his death, resurrection, and ascension: *None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But sorrow hath filled your heart.*

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

In these words our Saviour urges his disciples to submit to his departure, as that which would make way for his sending the Comforter to them; which, he assures them, would be of more advantage to them than his own stay and continuance amongst them. Thence learn, That the presence of the Holy Spirit with us is a greater comfort and advantage to us, than the presence of Christ in the flesh amongst us. Christ's bodily presence was comfortable, but the Spirit is more intimately a Comforter than Christ in his fleshly presence; because the Spirit can comfort all believers at once, in all places; but Christ's bodily presence can comfort but few, and that in one place only at once. Christ did converse with his disciples outwardly, but the Spirit possessed himself of their hearts inwardly. Now for the Spirit to dwell in us, is more advantageous than to have Christ dwell in the flesh amongst us. The benefit of Christ's conversation was great; but the advantage of the Spirit's renovation and holy inspiration is much greater: the one encourages and incites us to be holy, but the other quickens and enables us to be holy. Therefore well might Christ say, *it is expedient, or highly necessary or advantageous for you, that I go away.* He subjoins a reason: *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart,*



*I will send him to you.* Whence we learn, That Christ's ascension was indispensably necessary, in order to the Spirit's mission; the Spirit could not have descended, if Christ had not first ascended; the Spirit could not come, but by the gifts and mission of the Mediator. Now the sending of the Spirit being a part of Christ's royalty, as Mediator, it was not convenient that the Spirit should be sent, till Christ was crowned, and set down on his throne in his kingdom; then the Spirit was to make application to us, of the redemption purchased for us.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more: 11 Of judgment, because the prince of the world is judged.

In these and the following verses our Saviour acquaints his disciples with the advantages that will redound by the coming of the Comforter. First, The advantage to the world. Secondly, To the apostles. And, thirdly, To himself. To the world, 1. *He shall convince them of sin, righteousness, and judgment.* Of sin, that is, of their sinful state and nature, of the large extent of sin, and particularly of the sin of unbelief. Learn hence, 1. That the Spirit of God is the author of conviction of sin, and that all convictions of sin do either mediately or immediately flow from him. 2. That unbelief is a sin of the greatest malignity against Christ, and of the greatest danger to a christian's soul: *He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me.* Secondly, *Of righteousness;* that is, of the insufficiency of all human righteousness, and of the necessity of the righteousness of a Mediator; by which alone we are to expect acceptance with God; or of a complete and perfect righteousness in me, imputable to sinners for their perfect justification; and that it is so, appears, *Because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more.* As if Christ had said, "Hereby you may be satisfied that by my active and passive obedience I have fully satisfied my Father's justice for you, and you shall never be charged or condemned; because, when I go to heaven, I shall abide there in glory with my Father, and never be sent back again; ye shall

see me no more, as I must have been if any thing had been omitted by me." Note farther, That none are convinced of righteousness who are not first convinced of sin. None will come to Christ by faith, till convictions of sin have awakened and distressed them. Thirdly, *Of judgment:* that is, the Spirit shall convince the world that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, that he had power to judge Satan the prince of the world, and that he did by his death put down the kingdom of darkness. Learn hence, 1. That Satan is a prince, who by unjust usurpation, and sinners' voluntary consent, has exercised a tyrannical power over the world. 2. That Christ by his death did judge, condemn, and overcome, this mighty prince, and hath made his conquest evident to the consciences of men, by the convictions of his Holy Spirit: *The Spirit shall convince of judgment; that is, that Satan the prince of this world is judged.*

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:—

The second benefit which our Saviour declares was to be expected by the coming of the Holy Spirit, relates to the apostles themselves: *He shall guide you into all truth;* that is, into all truth necessary for you to know in order to salvation. This is a principal text which the Papists bring for their doctrine of infallibility; but groundlessly. For this promise was made to all the apostles, as well as Peter; nay, not only to the apostles, but to all their successors; yea, not to the apostles only and their successors, but to all believers also; for they are led by the Spirit of God, and that into all truth too; not absolutely, but into all necessary truth; and so far as a private christian follows the conduct and guidance of the divine Spirit, he is more infallible than either pope or council, who follow the dictates and directions of their own spirits only.

— For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come.

That is, he shall not teach you a private doctrine, or that which is contrary to what ye have learned of me, but whatsoever ye

shall hear of me, and receive from me, that shall he speak; and *he shall shew you things to come.* This affords an argument to prove the Holy Spirit to be God: he that can show us things to come, he that clearly foreseeth and infallibly foretelleth what shall be, before it is, is certainly God. But this the Holy Spirit doth: *He shall shew you things to come.* Men and devils may guess at things to come, but none can show things to come, but he that is truly and really God; therefore the Spirit is so.

14 He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Here Christ shows the advantage which would redound to himself by the coming of the Comforter; he declares that the Spirit should glorify him by his testimony, gifts, and miracles, and shall in all things accord with him, and thereby evidence that he hath his mission from him: *He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. And all things that the Father hath are mine.* Hence learn, That, although the union in essence amongst the Persons in the Trinity is the same, yet the order of their subsistence and operation is distinct; the Son being from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son: *For all things that the Father hath are mine: and the Spirit shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* Observe farther, That these words afford a strong argument to prove the divinity of Christ: *All things which the Father hath are mine.* Where Christ challenges to himself the incommunicable attributes of God, and consequently that essence which is inseparable from them. Doth the Father know the secrets of all hearts? so doth Christ, Rev. ii. 23. *All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts.* Is the Father eternal? so is Christ, Prov. viii. 23, *I was set up from everlasting, &c.*

16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, A little while and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father. 17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, A little while, and ye

shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? 18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? We cannot tell what he saith. 19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, A little while, and ye shall see me? 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. 21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but, as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. 22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

In these words our holy Lord proceeds to comfort his disciples with a promise, that, however he was now to be removed from them, yet they should shortly see him again; namely, after his resurrection; it being impossible that he should be held by death, but must arise and go to his Father. His disciples not understanding what he meant, but labouring under the prejudices of their national errors concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messias, knew not what to make of those words, *A little while and ye shall not see me.* Our Saviour therefore explains himself to his disciples, telling them, that they should have a time of sad sorrow and grief of heart, during the time of his sufferings and absence from them; but their sadness shall soon be turned into joy, when they shall see him alive again after his resurrection. This he illustrates by the similitude of a travelling woman, who soon forgets her sorrow after she hath brought forth a child. Thus will their hearts revive upon the sight of him risen from the grave: and no man shall be able to take away their joy from them, because he shall die no more, but go to heaven, and there live for ever, to make intercession for them. Learn hence, 1. From the apostles not understanding Christ's words con-

cerning his departure, though so often inculcated upon them; *A little while, and ye shall not see me, because I go to the Father.* Hence note, How unreasonable it is to arrogate to man's understanding a power to comprehend spiritual mysteries, yea, to understand the plainest truths, till Christ enlightens the understanding; let the doctrine be delivered never so plainly, and repeated never so frequently, yet will men continue ignorant, without divine illumination. How often had this plain doctrine of Christ's departure to the Father been preached to the disciples by Christ's own mouth? Yet still they say, *What is this he saith, We cannot tell what he saith.* Learn, 2. The different effects which Christ's absence should have upon the world, and upon his disciples; *The world will rejoice, but ye shall weep and lament.* Note, 1. That it is the wretched disposition of the world to rejoice in the absence and want of Christ out of the world. When I am gone, *the world will rejoice.* 2. That nothing is the cause of so much sorrow and sadness to sincere disciples, as Christ's absence and removal from them; such is their estimation of the worth of him, so great is their apprehension of the want of him, that there is no loss comparable to his absence and removal from them. Ye shall weep and lament at my departure, though the world will rejoice. Learn, 3. That the believer's sorrow for Christ's absence, though it be very great, yet it shall not be perpetual: *Ye have now sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you.* The joy of the saints may be interrupted, it shall never be totally extinguished; it is a permanent joy, of which they shall never be totally deprived, till they enter into the ocean of eternal joy, *Your joy no man taketh from you.*

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. 24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

At the first reading of the 23d verse there seems to be a contradiction in the words. Christ tells them in the former part of the verse, that they shall ask him nothing in that day; and yet promises that whatever

they ask shall be given them, in the latter part of the verse. To resolve this, know that there is a two-fold asking, one by way of question, the other by way of petition. The former is asking that we may know, or be informed in what we doubt; the latter is asking that we may receive, and be supplied with what we want. Now when Christ saith, *In that day ye shall ask me nothing*; it is as much as if he had said, "At present you understand but little of the mysteries of religion, and therefore ye put questions about many things; but in that day, when the Comforter comes, ye shall be so clearly enlightened by him, that ye shall not need to ask me any more questions." But when Christ saith, *Whatever ye ask of the Father in my name, he will give it*; the meaning is, "In that day when I have left the world, and ascended to my Father, you shall not need to address your prayers to me, but to my Father in my name." But what is it to pray in the name of Christ? Answer, It is more than to name Christ in prayer; it is easy to name Christ in prayer, but no easy thing to pray in the name of Christ. To pray in the name of Christ, is, 1. To look up to Christ, as having purchased for us this privilege, that we may pray; for it is by the blood of Christ that we draw near to God, and that a throne of grace is open to us. 2. To pray in the name of Christ is to pray in the strength of Christ, by the assistance of his grace, and the help of his Holy Spirit. 3. To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray by faith in the virtue of Christ's mediation and intercession, believing that what we ask on earth, he intercedes for and obtains in heaven. To pray thus is no easy matter; and unless we do pray thus, we do not pray at all. Ver. 24. *Hitherto have you asked nothing in my name*: that is, explicitly and expressly in my name, or by me as Mediator between God and man, and with respect to my merits. Do this after my death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God, and you shall receive such answers as will fill you with joy. For the saints of God under the Old Testament, and the apostles themselves under the New, had hitherto put up all their petitions in the name of the Messiah; though not in the name of Jesus. But now he exhorts them to eye his mediatory office in all their addresses to God, and promises them whatsoever he had purchased of the Father by his sufferings and satisfaction, they should

obtain it, for the sake of his prevailing intercession. Learn hence, That it is a mighty encouragement to prayer, that now, under the gospel, the person of the Mediator is exhibited in our flesh, has satisfied divine justice in our nature, and in that nature intercedes as Mediator, for whatever be purchased as our surety.—Hence is the encouragement, *Whatever ye ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs : but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

Here our Saviour tells his disciples, That although he had spoken many things to them in dark parables and figurative expressions, yet now the time was approaching, namely, the Comforter's coming, when he would by the Holy Ghost clearly enlighten their understandings in the knowledge of divine mysteries, and the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and particularly in the knowledge of God as his Father, and their Father in him. Hence learn, 1. That the clearest truths will be but parables, proverbs, and dark mysteries, even to disciples themselves, till the Holy Spirit enlightens their understandings. 2. That the clear and full manifestation of divine truth was reserved till the coming of the Comforter, who did communicate it to the apostles, and by them to the church or body of christians: *I, by him, will show you plainly of the Father.*

26 At that day ye shall ask in my name : and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you ; 27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

*At that day ye shall ask in my name :* that is, after I am ascended into heaven, and have sent down the Holy Ghost upon you, you shall put up all your prayers and requests to God in my name: *And I say not that I will pray the Father for you : for the Father himself loveth you.* That is, I need not tell you, (though I shall certainly do it,) that I will intercede with the Father for you, for he of himself is kindly disposed and affected towards you, for my sake. When Christ says, I do not say that I will pray the Father for you; the meaning

is not, that he will lay aside his office as intercessor for believers, but that they had not only his intercession, but the Father's love, upon which to ground their hope of audience. Learn hence, 1. That the christian prayers put up in Christ's name, cannot fail of audience and acceptance for the sake of the Mediator's intercession and the Father's love. 2. That in our prayers we ought so to eye and look up to Christ's intercession, as not to overlook or forget the Father's love, but ground our hopes of audience upon both : "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, (though I shall assuredly do it,) for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me."

28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world : again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. 29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. 30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee : by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Here observe, 1. A proof of our Saviour's godhead: *He came forth from the Father into the world.* He came out from the Father in his incarnation, and came into the world to accomplish the work of our redemption. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ is true God, equal with the Father ; for he was not only sent by him, but came forth from him: *I came forth from the Father.* Observe, 2. That it pleased Christ, out of love to his people, to leave the Father, and come into the world : not by being separated from the Deity, but by obscuring the Deity with the veil of our flesh, in order to the finishing the great and glorious work of redemption for us: *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world.* Observe, 3. That Christ having finished his suffering work here on earth, ascended into heaven, and sent down the Holy Spirit to apply unto his church the redemption purchased by his blood: again, *I leave the world and go to the Father.* Observe, lastly, How the apostles argue from the knowledge of Christ's omniscience to the certainty of his divinity: *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things : by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.* The knowledge and experience of Christ's

omniscience, may and ought fully to confirm us in the belief of his deity; for that attribute of the Deity cannot be communicated to any person without the communication of the divine nature.

31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? 32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

In the foregoing verse, the apostles made a full profession of their faith in Christ's divinity, and in Christ's omniscience: *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and that thou camest forth from God.* In this verse Christ intimates to them, that their faith should be put upon a great trial very shortly, namely, when his sufferings came on; and that then they should all forsake him, and take care of themselves: *Ye shall be scattered, and leave me alone.* Learn hence, 1. That Christ was forsaken and left alone by his own disciples in the day of his greatest distress and danger. 2. Then when the disciples left Christ, they were scattered every one to his own. 3. That when all forsook Christ, and left him alone, he was far from being simply alone, because God was with him: *Ye shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* God was with Christ, and will be with christians in a suffering hour, in his essential presence, in his gracious and supporting presence: "He that sent me (says Christ) is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please my Father."

33 These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

These words are the conclusion of our Saviour's farewell sermon to his disciples, in which he declares to them, 1. The inevitable necessity of the world's trouble: *In the world ye shall have tribulation*; that is, while ye have to do with the men of the world, while ye have any thing to do with the things of the world; nay, while you have a being in the world; you must look for trouble, both from within and from without, from friends and foes, in body, soul, name, estate; heart-breaking troubles,

soul-rending troubles, such troubles as will make the heart to break, and the back to bend; and you, my disciples, must expect it as well as others: *In the world ye shall have tribulation.* Hence learn, That the disciples of Christ in this world may, yea, must expect and look for trouble. Observe, 2. The remedy provided by Christ against this malady: *In me ye shall have peace*, when in the world ye have tribulation. *Ye shall have peace*: that is, serenity of mind, a quiet and calm temper of spirit within, when the world, like a tempestuous air, is full of storms without. Learn thence, That though in the world Christ's own disciples must look for and expect troubles, yet he has taken effectual care that, amidst all their troubles, in him they may have peace; Christ's blood has purchased peace for them, his word has promised it to them, and his Spirit seals it upon their souls. Observe, 3. The cordial provided by Christ for the support of his disciples' spirits, under the sinking burden of the world's tribulations and troubles: *But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* I have taken the sting out of every cross, and the venom out of every arrow. Learn hence, That it is a great comfort to a christian, under all the troubles of this world, to consider, that Christ has overcome the world, that is, all things in the world, which may hinder his people's comfort and consolation here, and their eternal happiness and salvation hereafter; namely, the prince of the world, the rulers of the world, the wicked men of the world, the troubles of the world, the temptations of the world, the corruptions that are in the world through lust. Now Christ having overcome the world, all persons and things in it are at his disposal, and can do nothing but by his permission; and as he has overcome the world himself, so he will enable us through faith in him, to overcome it also. 1 John v. 4. *This is the victory over the world, even our faith.*

#### CHAP. XVII.

**T**HESE words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

Our blessed Saviour having ended his consolatory and valedictory sermon, contained in the three foregoing chapters; in

this chapter we have recorded his last prayer, with and for his disciples, before he left the world; which is a copy left upon earth, of what he doth now intercede for as an advocate in heaven. "It is good (saith one) to compare scripture with scripture, but not to prefer scripture before scripture; all scripture being written by inspiration of God:" but if any part of scripture be to be magnified above another, this chapter claims the pre-eminence; it contains the breathings-out of Christ's soul for his church and children before his departure; not for his disciples only, but for the succeeding church to the end of the world. In the verse before us, observe, 1. The order of our Saviour's prayer: *These words spake Jesus*: that is, after he had finished his excellent sermon, he closes the exercise with a most fervent and affectionate prayer; teaching his ministers, by his example, to add solemn prayer and supplication to all their instructions and exhortations: if every creature of God be to be sanctified by prayer, much more the word of God, which works not as a natural agent, but as a moral instrument in God's hand. Now as God sets the word on work, so is it prayer that sets God on work. Observe, 2. As the order of Christ's prayer, so the gesture in which he prayed: *He lifted up his eyes to heaven*;—as an indication of his soul being lifted up to God in heaven; to signify his reverence of God, whose throne is in heaven; and to denote his confidence in God, and raised expectation of aid and help from God, and not from any creature. Learn, That the gestures which we use in prayer, should be such as may express our reverence of God, and denote our affiance and trust in him. Observe, 3. The person prayed to, God, under the appellation of a *Father*: it intimates a sweet relation; it is a word of endearing affection, and implies great reverence towards God, and great confidence and trust in him. Learn, it is very sweet and comfortable in prayer, when we can come and call God *Father*. Observe, 4. The mercy prayed for; *The hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee*. The hour is come; that is, "The hour of my sufferings, and thy satisfaction; the hour of my victory, and of thy glory; the hour, the sad hour, determined in thy decree and purpose." No calamity can touch us till God's hour is come; and when the sad hour is come, the best remedy is prayer, and the only person to fly unto for succour is our hea-

venly Father.—Father, the hour is come, the doleful hour of my death and passion; glorify thy Son, glorify him at his death, by manifesting him to have been the Son of God; glorify him in his death, by accepting it as the death of thy Son for the sins of the world: glorify him after his death, by a speedy resurrection from the grave, and triumphant exaltation at thy right hand. Here note, How the glory of the Father and the Son are inseparably linked together; it was the Father's design to glorify the Son, and it was the Son's desire to have glory from the Father, for this end, that he might bring glory to the Father: *Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee*.

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Observe here, 1. The dignity which Christ was invested with, *power over all flesh*: that is, authority to judge and sentence all mankind. Observe, 2. How Christ came to be invested with this power; it was given him by his Father: *Thou hast given him power over all flesh*. Hence the Socinians would infer, that he was not God, because he received all from God: but the text speaks not of his divine power as God, but of his power as Mediator. And the note is, That all mankind is under the power and authority of Jesus Christ as Mediator; he has a legislative power, or a power to give laws to all mankind; and a judiciary power, or a power to execute the laws that he hath given. Observe, 3. The end for which Christ was invested with this power: *That he might give eternal life to as many as God hath given him*. Here note, 1. That all believers, that is, all sincere and serious christians, are given by God the Father unto Christ; they are given to him as his charge, to redeem, sanctify, and save; and as his reward, *Isa. liii. 10*. 2. All that are given to Christ, have life from him; a life of justification and sanctification on earth, and a life of glory in heaven. 3. The life which Christ gives to them that are given him, is eternal life. 4. That this eternal life is a free gift from Christ unto his people; though they do not work for wages, yet they shall not work for nothing: *I give unto them eternal life*.

3 And this is life eternal, that

they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

That is, "This is the true way and means to obtain eternal life, namely, by the true knowledge of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ the Mediator, who was commissioned and sent by his Father to accomplish the work of redemption for a lost world." Here observe, Christ calls God the Father *the only true God*: not in opposition to the Son and Holy Ghost, who, being one in essence with the Father, are truly and really God, as well as the Father; but in opposition to idols and false gods. There is a great difference betwixt these two propositions: The Father is the only true God, and the Father only is true God. Christ saith the former: *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God*. The Socinians say the latter: This is life eternal, to know only thee to be the true God, and that neither Jesus Christ nor the Spirit are God, but the Father only. But how comes eternal life to depend as well upon the knowledge of Jesus Christ, as of God the Father, if Jesus Christ be only man, and not truly and really God? For thus our Saviour affirms, *This is life eternal, to know thee and Jesus Christ*. Whence learn, 1. That the beginning, increase, and perfection of eternal life, lieth in holy knowledge. 2. That no knowledge is sufficient to eternal life, but the knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ, who is also God; for who can think that the knowledge of a mere creature should be accounted equally necessary to salvation with the knowledge of the great and mighty God? Surely, if our happiness consists equally in the knowledge of God and Christ, then God and Christ are of the same nature, equal in power and glory. The comprehensive sense of the word seems to be this, "That the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ the Mediator, is the life of grace, and the necessary way to the life of glory."

#### 4 I have glorified thee on earth:—

Learn hence, That the whole life of Christ, while here on earth, was a glorifying of his Father; he glorified his Father by the doctrine which he preached; he glorified his Father by the miracles which he wrought; he glorified his Father by the unspotted purity and innocency of his life, and by his unparalleled sufferings at his death.

—I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

That is, I am now about to finish it: He speaks of what he was resolved to do, as already done. Here note, 1. That it is work that glorifies God. 2. That every man has his work, his proper work, assigned him by God. 3. This work must be finished here upon earth. 4. That, when we have done our proportion of work, we may expect our proportion of wages. 5. That it is a blessed thing at the hour of death to be able to say in sincerity and uprightness, that we have glorified God in the world, and have finished the work which he appointed us to do: *Father, I have glorified thee on earth; and have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

From the connexion of this with the former verse learn, 1. That whoever expects to be glorified of God in heaven, must glorify him first here upon earth. 2. That, after we have glorified him, we may expect to be glorified with him and by him. *I have glorified thee, And now, O Father, glorify thou me*; it follows, *with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*. Here note, 1. That Christ, as God, had an essential glory with God the Father before the world was: He had this glory not in the purpose and decree of God only, as the Socinians would have it; for he doth not say, "Glorify me with the glory which thou didst purpose and prepare for me before the world was;" but "which I had and enjoyed with thee before the world was:" by which words our Lord plainly asserts his own existence and being from eternity, and prays for a re-exaltation to that glory which he enjoyed with his Father before his incarnation. Note, 2. That Christ, as Mediator, did so far humble himself, that he needed to pray for his Father to bestow upon him the glory which he wanted; namely, the glory of his ascension and exaltation: *Now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self*. As if Christ had said, "Father, glorify me, embrace and honour me as thy Son, who have been, in the eyes of the world, handled disgracefully as a servant." It is an actual glory that Christ speaks of, not in decree and purpose

only, for that believers had as well as he ; but this was a glory when no creature was in being.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word.

By the name of God, we are here to understand his nature, his property, and attributes, his designs and counsels for the salvation of mankind. Christ, as the prophet of his church, made all these known unto his people. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ has made a full and complete discovery of his Father's mind and will unto his people : *I have manifested thy name unto them which thou gavest me : Thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word.* Learn, 1. That all believers are given unto Christ, as his purchase, and as his charge : they are given him as his subjects, as his children ; as the wife of his bosom, as the members of his body. Learn, 2. That none are given to Christ, but those that were first the Father's : *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.* Learn, 3. That all those that are given unto Christ, do keep his word ; they keep it in their understandings, they hide it in their hearts, they feel the force of it in their souls, they express the power of it in their lives : *They have kept thy word.*

7 Now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee.

Observe here, 1. The faithfulness of Christ in revealing the whole will of his Father to his disciples. 2. The proficiency of his disciples in the school of Christ : they knew all the things which Christ had told them ; namely, that whatsoever he had, was given him of the Father, and that he had these things from him to be a mediator. Learn hence, That Christ hath approved himself a faithful prophet to his church ; a faithful messenger from his Father to his people, in that he hath added nothing to his message, nor taken nothing from it. 2. That it is our duty to know and believe on Christ, as the only messenger and mediator sent of God : *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.*

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me : and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

As if Christ had said, " The message by thee my Father committed to me, I have communicated to them my disciples, and they have received it, and will communicate it from thee to the world ; being sufficiently assured that my coming and preaching was all by commission from thee." Hence learn, 1. That the doctrine of the gospel, which was revealed by Christ, was received from the Father. 2. That faith is a receiving of the word of Christ, and of Christ in and by the word. Receiving is a relative term, and presupposes an offer. God offers on his part, and we receive on our part, the whole word with the whole heart. That the ministers of the gospel are to preach that, and only that, which they have out of the word of God : *I have given them the word which thou gavest me.*

9 I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine.

That is, " I now offer up a prayer particularly, 1. For my apostles, designed for so great a work as the preaching of the everlasting gospel to the obstinate Jews and obdurate Gentiles. 2. I intercede also for all believers at this time, for their perseverance in the faith, and constancy in persecution, but I do not now intercede for the wicked and impenitent world, they not being capable (whilst such) of these mercies and blessings ;" though at other times we find him praying for the world, yea, for his very crucifiers : *Father, forgive them, &c.* Nay, in this very prayer, at the 20th verse, he prays for the world ; that is, for the Gentile world ; all those that, by the preaching of the apostles and their successors, should be brought to believe on him to the end of the world. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great and gracious intercessor. 2. That all believers, all the children of God in general, are under the fruit and benefit of Christ's intercession. 3. That as all the members of Christ in general, so the ministers and ambassadors of Christ in spe-



cial, have a peculiar interest in Christ's intercession; and great are the advantages of his intercession for them, 1. From the person interceding, Christ: consider the dignity of his person, God-man: the dear-ness of his person, God's Son. 2. From the manner of his intercession: not by way of entreaty, but meritorious claim. 3. From the sublimity of his office: our intercessor is near to God, even at his right hand. 4. From the fruits of his intercession: it procures the acceptance and justification of our persons, the hearing and answering of our prayers, the pardon and forgiveness of our sins, our preservation in grace, and our hopes of eternal glory.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.

We may understand this two ways; 1. Of all persons; all my friends, all my disciples, are thine as well as mine. Thence learn, That the Father and the Son have a like share and property in all believers. 2. The words in the original, being of the neuter gender, signify, All thy things are mine, and all my things are thine. Christ and his Father are one, and they agree in one; they have the same essence and nature, the same attributes and will; Christ hath all things that the Father hath, willeth all things that the Father willeth, and doeth all things that the Father doeth; he is therefore really and essentially God. It followeth, *And I am glorified in them*: that is, I am made glorious by their owning and receiving me, by their believing in me, and accepting of me for their Lord and Saviour. Thence note, That the Lord Jesus Christ is eminently glorified in and by all those that believe in him, and belong unto him.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Here observe, 1. Our Saviour's present condition: *I am no more in the world*: that is, I shall continue on earth but a small time longer, and then ascend to my Father in heaven. Learn thence, That Jesus Christ, as he is man, he is gone out of this lower world into the immediate presence of his Father; he had been abased before, he

must be exalted now; he had no more work to do on earth, but much to do in heaven, therefore he left this earth to go to heaven. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's prayer to his Father for his apostles, before he left the world: *Holy Father, keep them*; that is, preserve them by thy divine power and goodness, for the glory of thy holy name. Here note, 1. The title and appellation given to God, *Holy Father*. Thence learn, That when we go to God in prayer, especially for grace and sanctification, we must look upon him as an holy Father, as essentially and originally holy, as infinitely and independently holy. Note, 2. The supplication requested of God: *Keep through thy name those whom thou hast given me*. Thence learn, That the perseverance of the saints in a state of grace, is the sweet effect and fruit of Christ's prayer: Christ has begged it, and it cannot be denied, there being such an harmony and sweet consent betwixt the will of the Father and the will of the Son. Three things concur to the believer's perseverance. On the Father's part there is everlasting love, and all-sufficient power. On the Son's part, there is everlasting merit, and constant intercession. On the Spirit's part, there is a perpetual inhabitation, and continued influence. Observe, 3. The end of Christ's supplication on behalf of his people: *That they may be one, as we are one*. Here note, 1. That the heart of Christ is exceedingly set upon the unity and comeness of his members. The believers' union with Christ their head, and one with another, has some resemblance to that unity that is betwixt the Father and the Son. For it is an holy and spiritual union, a close and intimate union, an indissoluble and inseparable union.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Observe here, 1. That those which shall be saved, are given unto Christ, and committed to his care and trust. 2. That none of those that are given unto Christ, as his charge, and committed to his care and trust, shall be finally lost: *Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost*: it follows, *but the son of perdi-*

*tion.* A person may be said to be the son of perdition two ways; actively and passively. Actively, he is so who makes it his work and business to destroy others. Passively, he is a son of perdition, who for his wickedness in destroying others, is destroyed himself. Judas was a son of perdition in both these senses; his heart was maliciously set upon destroying Christ, and wilfully set upon his own destruction: his covetousness and hypocrisy prompted him to betray our Saviour, his despair provoked him to destroy himself.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

In these words our Saviour declares the great reason why he did at this time so publicly and solemnly pray for his disciples; it was to fill them with joy and comfort, that their joy might not be diminished by Christ's departure, but rather increased by the coming of the Comforter: *That they may have my joy fulfilled in them:* that is, the joy which they take in me, and the joy which they have from me. There is a double care which Christ takes of his people, namely, a care of their graces, and a care of their joy and comfort: how solicitous was he to leave his disciples joyful before he departed from them! He delights to see his people cheerful; and he knows of what great use spiritual joy is in the christian's course, both to enable us for doing, and to fit us for suffering. Learn hence, 1. That Christ is the author and original of the joy of his people: *My joy.* 2. That it is Christ's will and desire, that his people might be full of holy joy: *That my joy may be fulfilled in them.* 3. That the great end of Christ's prayer and intercession was, and is, that his people's hearts may be full of joy: *These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*

14 I have given them thy word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

*I have given them thy word,* partly by external revelation, and partly by internal illumination; and for thy word's sake the world hates them, as also *because they are not of the world.* Learn, 1. That christians, especially ministers to whom Christ

has given his word, must expect the world's hatred. Few of the prophets or apostles died a natural death: as their calling is eminent, so must their sufferings be exemplary. The best ministers, and the best men, are usually most hated. There is an antipathy against the power of godliness; or a cruel, causeless, implacable, and irreconcilable hatred against the saints, because of their strictness in religion, and contrariety to the world. 2. That it is to the honour of believers that they are like unto Christ, in being the objects of the world's hatred: *The world hates them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world.* This Christ adds both for information and consolation; for information, that they should look for such hatred, misery, and trouble, as they saw him grapple with; and for consolation, to think that the world can never hate us so bad as it hated Christ.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Here observe, 1. That the wisdom of Christ sees fit to continue his children and people in the world, notwithstanding all the perils and dangers of the world. He has work for them, and they are of use to him, for a time, in the world; till their work be done, Christ's love will not, and the world's malice cannot, remove them from hence. Yet Christ prays that his Father would keep them from the evil; that is, from the sins, temptations, and snares of this wicked world. Thence note, That a spiritual victory over evil is to be preferred before a total exemption from evil; it is a far greater mercy to be kept from sin in our afflictions, than from the afflictions themselves. Learn farther, how necessary divine aid is to our preservation and success, even in the holiest and best of enterprizes, and how necessary it is to seek it by fervent prayer. Note also, That such as sincerely devote themselves to Christ's service, are sure of his aid and protection whilst so employed.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Sanctify them, not initially, for so they were sanctified already, but progressively: let them increase more and more in grace and holiness. Learn hence, 1. That such

as are already sanctified, must labour and ought to endeavour after further measures and higher degrees of sanctification: that the most holy may yet be more holy. 2. The word of God is the great instrument in God's hand for his people's sanctification. 3. That the word of God is the truth of God: *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.* The word of God is a divine truth, an eternal truth, an infallible truth, an holy truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Observe here, 1. Christ's mission; the Father sent him into the world. Christ's sending implies the designation of his person, his qualification for the work, his authority and commission. Learn hence, That Christ did not of himself undertake the office of a Mediator, but was sent; that is, authorized and commissioned of God so to do; *Thou hast sent me into the world.* Observe, 2. As Christ's mission, so the apostles' mission: *As thou hast sent me, so have I sent them.* Learn thence, That none may, or ought, to undertake the office of the ministry, without an authoritative sending from Christ himself; not immediately and extraordinarily by voice or vision, but immediately by the officers of the church. And such as are so sent, are sent by Christ himself; and if so, it is the people's duty to reverence their persons, to respect their office, to receive their message: *As thou hast sent me, so have I sent them.*

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

The word *sanctify* here, is not to be taken for the cleansing, purifying, or making holy, that which before was unclean; but Christ's sanctifying himself imports, 1. His separation of setting himself apart to be a sacrifice for sin. 2. His consecration or dedication of himself to this holy use and service. Hence learn, That Jesus Christ did dedicate and solemnly set himself apart to the great work and office of a Mediator. Learn, 2. That the great end for which Christ did thus sanctify himself, was, that he might sanctify his members; therefore did he consecrate and set himself apart for us, that we should be consecrated to, and wholly set apart for, him.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Hitherto our Saviour had been praying for himself and his apostles; now he prays for all persons, both Jews and Gentiles, that should believe on him, throughout the world, by the preaching of the gospel. Hence learn, 1. That all believers have a special interest in Christ's prayer. 2. That in the sense of the gospel they are believers who are wrought upon to believe in Christ through the word. 3. That such is Christ's care of and love to his own, that they were remembered by him in his prayer, even before they had a being: *I pray not for these alone, but for all that shall believe in me.*

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

The special mercy, and particular blessing which Christ prays for on behalf of believers, is a close and intimate union betwixt the Father, himself, and them, and also betwixt one another; such an union as doth in some sort resemble that union which is betwixt God and Christ; not an unity of essence and nature, but of wills and affections. Hence note, 1. That the mystical union betwixt Christ and his members carrieth some resemblance with that union which is betwixt the Father and the Son. 2. That union amongst the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, is of so great importance, necessity, and consequence, that he did in their behalf principally and chiefly pray for it. An unity of love and affection, of faith and profession, an unity of practice and conversation, are mercies which Christ earnestly prayed for, and has dearly paid for; and nothing is more desired by him now in heaven, than that his disciples should be one among themselves here on earth: *Father, may they be one, as we are one; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* Here Christ intimates one special advantage that would redound to the world by this desirable union betwixt the ministers and members of Christ; it will, if not convert, yet at least convince the world, that I and my doctrine came from God. Thence note, That union amongst Christ's disciples is one special mean to enlarge the kingdom of Christ,

and to cause the world to have better thoughts of him and his doctrine : *By their being one, as we are one, the world will believe that thou hast sent me.*

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one :

Here observe, 1. Christ's communication of that glory to believers, which he had received of the Father ; that is, not his essential glory, but his mediatorial glory : *The glory which thou gavest me.* Now Christ hath no glory given him as God, but much glory bestowed upon him as Mediator. Observe, 2. The end of this communication, why he gave his disciples that glory which the Father had given him ; namely, that *they might be one.* Learn, 1. That God the Father had bestowed much glory on Christ his Son, as he is Man, and Mediator of the church. 2. That the same glory for kind and substance, though not for measure and degree, which Christ as Mediator has received from the Father, is communicated to true believers. 3. That the great end of this communication was, and is, to oblige and enable his people to maintain a very strict union among themselves ; *The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.* 4. That unity amongst believers is part of that glory which Christ as Mediator hath obtained for them.

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one : and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.

Observe here, 1. That as the Father is in Christ, so is Christ in believers, and they in him : the Father is in Christ in respect of his divine nature, essence, and attributes ; and Christ is in believers, by the inhabitation of his Holy Spirit. Observe, 2. That the believers' happiness consisteth in their oneness, in being one with God through Christ, and one amongst themselves : *That they may be made perfect in one.* Observe, 3. That God the Father loveth Christ his Son : *Thou lovest them as thou hast loved me.* God loveth Christ, first, as God ; so he is *Primum Amabile*, the first object of his love, as representing his attributes exactly. Secondly, as Mediator, John x.

17. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for my sheep.* Observe 4. That God the Father loves believers, even as he loved Christ himself ; that is, he loves them upon the same grounds that he loved him ; namely, for their nearness, and for their likeness to him. 1. For their nearness and relation to him ; he loveth Christ as his Son, believers as his children, 1 John iii. 1. *Behold what manner of love the Father bestoweth upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !* 2. The properties of the Father's love towards Christ and believers are the same : doth he love Christ with a tender love, with an unchangeable love, with an everlasting love ? so doth he love believers also. Observe, 5. That Christ would have the world know, that God the Father loveth the children of men, as well as himself ; Christ is not ambitious to engross all our love unto himself, but would have the world take notice of the good-will of his Father, as well as of himself, to lost mankind ; of the Father's loving himself, as well as of his own love in coming : *That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Our Saviour had prayed for his disciples' sanctification before, here he prays for their glorification : 1. *That they may be where he is :* now Christ is with them in his ordinances, in his word, and at his table ; ere long they shall be with him as his friends, as his spouse, as his companions, in his kingdom. 2. That they may be with him where he is ; that is more than the former ; a blind man may be where the sun is, but not with the sun, because he doth not enjoy the light and benefit of it ; To be with Christ where he is, imports union and communion with him. 3. That being with him where he is, *they may behold his glory ;* that is, to see it, and everlastingly to possess and enjoy it. Learn, 1. That all those that are given to Christ as his charge, and as his reward, shall certainly come to heaven to him ; *Father, I will that they be with me ;* because I have merited that they should be with me ; I will that they behold my glory, because I

have purchased it at so dear a rate. Learn, 2. That the work and employment of the saints in heaven chiefly consist in seeing and enjoying Christ's glory; for it will be a possessive sight; the language of every look will be, "This happiness is mine, this glory is mine." 3. That the top and height of the saints' happiness in heaven consists in this, that they shall be with Christ; *Father, I will that they may be with me, to behold my glory.*

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

Observe here, 1. The appellation given to God: *O righteous Father.* This is the sixth time that Christ in this prayer has called God, Father, it being so sweet a relation, and producing all love, delight, joy, and confidence in God, by him that practically reproves it. But observe, That at ver. 11. when Christ prayed for his people's sanctification, he said, *Holy Father*, making use of that attribute which is the cause of all holiness in the creature; but now praying for their glorification, he says, *O righteous Father*; righteous in making good thy promises both to me and them. Observe, 2. What it is that our Saviour affirms concerning the wicked and unbelieving world, that they have not known God; *The world hath not known thee*; not as if the world hath not known him at all, but not known him aright; the unbelieving and unsanctified part of the world having no saving knowledge of God, not living answerably to what they know to be their duty. Observe, 3. What Christ affirms concerning himself: *But I have known thee, and these have known thee.* Intimating thus much unto us, that Jesus Christ knows God immediately, and all others know him by the means of Christ; Christ is the original and fountal cause of all the saving knowledge that believers have of God. There is not the least ray of saving illumination that doth not descend from Christ and the Spirit of Christ: *I have known thee, and these have known that thou didst send me.*

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it;

That is, "I have made known unto them thy nature, attributes, counsels, will, and commands, and I will continue the

manifestation of the same unto the end. Learn thence, That the saving knowledge of God was not attainable by natural abilities, but cometh to us by the special revelation of Jesus Christ: *I have declared unto them thy name.* Learn, 2. That they that have the name of God, his nature, and will, savingly declared to them, do not stand in need of any farther declarations and discoveries of God's nature and will to be made unto them: *I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it.*

—That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

That is, "That the love which is originally in thyself, as the fountain of all grace, may be communicated and dispensed from thee to them, and become inherent in them." Learn hence, That it is not enough for the people of God that they are beloved of him, and that his love is towards them; but they must endeavour to have it in them; that is, experience it in the effects of it, and in the sense and feeling of it in their own souls. The safety of a christian lies in this, that God loves him; but the joy, the comfort, and happiness of a christian, consists in the knowledge, in the sensible apprehension and feeling, of his love; therefore Christ closeth his prayer for his members, with this affectionate and comprehensive petition: *Let the love wherewith thou hast loved me, be in them, and I in them.*

#### CHAP. XVIII.

**W**HEN Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. 2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place; for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.

No sooner had our dear Lord ended his divine prayer, recorded in the foregoing chapter, but he goes forth to meet his sufferings with a willing cheerfulness. He retires with his disciples into a garden, not to hide and shelter himself from his enemies; for, if so, it had been the most improper place he could have chosen; it being the accustomed place where he was wont to pray, and a place well known to Judas, who was now coming to seek him. *Judas*

*which betrayed him knew the place ; for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples ; so that Christ repaired to this garden, not to shun but to meet the enemy, to offer himself a prey to the wolves, which in the garden hunted him, and laid hold upon him ; he also resorted to this garden now for privacy, that he might freely pour out his soul to God. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ was praying to his Father in the garden, when Judas with his black guard came to apprehend him. As the sin of the first Adam, which brought destruction upon his posterity, was committed in a garden, so the salutary passion of the second Adam, which was to rescue us from that destruction, did begin in a garden also.*

3 Judas then, having received a band of *men*, and officers, from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Observe, 1. What a multitude were here employed by the chief priests and Pharisees, for apprehending a single person : gown men and sword men, young and old, Jew and Gentile : all sorts of persons contriving his death, as all conditions of people were afterwards to receive benefit by it. But what need these lanterns and torches, it being then, as some observe, full moon, when they sought him in the garden ? All this argued their zealous industry for our Saviour's apprehension, that they might be sure to find him, in case he should hide himself in any holes or corners of the garden. Learn hence, That persecutors and wicked apostates are not asleep in their designs and actings, but very vigilant and active ; when at the same time Christ's own disciples and followers are asleep and careless. How active was Judas, and how watchful was his bloody crew, even at that time when Christ's disciples could not keep their eyes open !

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye ? 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Observe here, 1. How our Lord's sufferings were all foreknown to himself, before they came upon him, and yet how willingly and cheerfully did he go forth to meet them. Should our sufferings be known unto us before they come upon us, how would it disquiet and disturb us ! yea, not only discompose us, but distract us ! In great wisdom, therefore, and in tender mercy, has God concealed future events from us. But it was otherwise with Christ ; he had an exact knowledge of those bitter sufferings which he was to undergo, and yet with a composed mind he goes forth to meet them : *Jesus knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth.* " Lord ! how endearing are our obligations to thyself, that when thou knewest beforehand the bitterness of that cup, which the justice of God was about to put into thy hand, thou didst not decline to drink it off for our sakes ! Observe, 2. That it was not man's power, but Christ's own permission, which brought his sufferings upon him. How easily could Christ have delivered himself out of his enemies' hands, who with a word from his mouth caused them to go backward and fall to the ground ! Christ in speaking those words did let out a little ray or beam of his deity, and this struck them down. Mark what a strange power was here in the word of Christ, and that not an angry word neither. He did not chide them, and say, " You wretches, how dare you lay hands on me, and carry me to judgment who shall one day be your judge ! Christ only said, *I am he*, and down they fell. O what fear will Christ send out when he cometh to judge the world, who could send forth such a fear when he yielded up himself to be judged and condemned in the world ! If there was so much majesty in the voice of Christ, in one of the lowest acts of his humiliation, what will the voice of a glorified Christ be to sinners, when he shall come as a judge to condemn the world.

7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye ? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way : 9 That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

Here note, 1. How voluntarily and freely

Christ laid down his life! When his enemies were fallen to the ground, he suffered them to rise again, and offers himself to them to take him and carry him away. Note, 2. How the sight of this glorious miracle of the soldiers falling to the ground did not deter or discourage them from their wicked purpose; they get up again, and go on with their bloody design. Learn hence, That obstinate and obdurate sinners will not be reclaimed by the most evident and convincing, by the most miraculous and surprising, appearances of God against them. Note, 3. How mindful, in the midst of his sufferings, Christ was of his dear disciples, to secure them, at this time, from death and danger; *If ye seek me, let these go their way*: that is, my disciples, against whom ye have no warrant at this time. Learn hence, That Christ is so tender of his followers, that he will not put them upon trials, or call them forth to sufferings, till they are ripe and ready, fitted and prepared for them. The disciples yet were weak and feeble, timorous and fearful, and Christ had much work and service for them to do in the world; namely, to plant and propagate the gospel in foreign countries; he therefore resolves not to lose any one of them by persecution at this time. And thus was his word fulfilled, *Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none*.

10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high-priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath:—

Observe here, St Peter's love unto, and zeal for, his Lord and Master, in defence of whom he now draws his sword: but why did he not rather draw upon Judas than upon Malchus? Possibly, because though Judas was most faulty, yet Malchus might be most forward to carry off our Saviour. O, how doth a pious breast swell with indignation, at the sight of an open affront offered unto its Saviour! Observe farther, The rebuke which Christ gave St. Peter for what he did: though his heart was sincere, yet his hand was rash; good intentions are no warrant for irregular actions: Christ will thank no man for drawing a sword in defence of him, without a warrant and commission from him. To resist a lawful magistrate, even in

Christ's own defence, is rash zeal, and discountenanced by the gospel.

—The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

Here observe, 1. A metaphorical description of Christ's sufferings: they are a cup put into his hand to drink off, and that by his own Father. They are a cup, and but a cup: God will not over-charge his people; and this cup is from the hand of a Father, yea, from the hand of our Father: *The cup which our Father hath given me*. Observe, 2. Our Lord's resolution to drink off this cup, how bitter soever, being put to his mouth by his Father's hand: *Shall I not drink it?* that is, I will drink it. Learn hence, 1. That oft-times the wisdom of God is pleased to put a cup, a very bitter cup, of affliction into the hand of those to drink whom he doth most sincerely love. 2. That when God doth so, it is their duty to drink it with silence and submission: *Shall I not drink it?* That is, I will certainly drink it with cheerfulness and resignation.

12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews, took Jesus, and bound him, 13 And led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high-priest that same year. 14 Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

Judas having made good his promise to the chief priests, and delivered Jesus a prisoner bound into their hands, those evening wolves no sooner seize the Lamb of God, but they thirst and long to suck his innocent blood; yet, lest it should look like a downright murder, they allow him a mock-trial, and abuse the law by perverting it to injustice and bloodshed. How impossible is it for the greatest innocence and virtue to protect from slander and false accusation! and no person can be so innocent or good, whom false witnesses may not condemn.

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high-priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high-priest. 16 But Peter stood at the door

without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high-priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. 17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. 18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals: for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

All the four evangelists give us an account of Peter's fall in denying his Master. And therein we have observable, 1. The sin itself which he fell into, the denial of Christ, and this backed with an oath; he swore that he knew not the man. Lord! how may the slavish fear of suffering drive the holiest and best of men to commit the foulest and worst of sins? Observe, 2. The occasion of his fall. 1. His presumptuous confidence of his own strength and standing: *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.* Lord! to presume upon ourselves, is the ready way to provoke thee to leave us to ourselves. If ever we stand in the day of trial, 'tis the fear of falling must enable us to stand; we soon fall, if we believe it impossible to fall. 2. His being in bad company, amongst Christ's enemies: Peter had better have been a-cold by himself alone, than warming himself at a fire which was compassed in with the blasphemies of the soldiers, where his conscience, tho' not seared, was yet made hard. Observe, 3. The reiteration or repetition of this sin: he denied Christ again and again; he denied him first with a lie, then with an oath and curse. O, how dangerous is it not to resist the beginnings of sin! If we yield to one temptation, Satan will assault us with more and stronger. Observe, 4. The heinous and aggravating circumstances of Peter's sin. 1. From the character of his person; a disciple, an apostle, a chief apostle, yet he denies Christ. 2. From the person whom he denies: his Master, his Saviour. 3. The time when he denied him: soon after Christ had washed his feet; yea, soon after he had received the sacrament from Christ's own hand. How unreasonable then is their objection against coming to the Lord's table, that some who go to it, dishonour

Christ as soon as they come from it! Such examples ought not to discourage us from coming to the ordinance, but should excite and increase our watchfulness after we have been there, that our after-deportment may be suitable to the solemnity of a sacramental table.

19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. 21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I had said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

Our Saviour being brought before Caiaphas the high-priest, he examines him concerning his doctrine, and his disciples, pretending him to be guilty of heresy in doctrine, and sedition in gathering disciples and followers. Our Saviour answers, that as to his doctrine, he had not delivered it in holes and corners, but had taught publicly in the temple and synagogues; and that in secret he had said nothing, that is, nothing contrary to what he had delivered in public. Christ never willingly affected corners; he taught openly, and propounded his doctrine publicly and plainly in the world. A convincing evidence, that both he and his doctrine were of God. Learn hence, 1. That it is not unusual for the best of doctrines to pass under the odious name and imputation of error and heresy. Christ's own doctrine is here charged: *The high-priest asked Jesus of his doctrine.* 2. That the ministers of Christ who have truth on their side, may and ought to speak boldly and openly: *I spake openly unto the world.* "Veritas nihil erubescit, præterquam abscondi." Truth blushes at nothing, except at its being concealed; *In secret*, says Christ, *have I said nothing.*

22 And, when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high-priest so? 23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why



smitest thou me? 24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high-priest. 25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said, therefore, unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. 26 One of the servants of the high-priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? 27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

Observe here, 1. How insolently and injuriously an officer strikes our Saviour in this court of judicature: *One of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of his hand.* What had the holy and innocent Jesus done, to deserve these buffetings? He only made use of the liberty which their law did allow him, which was not to accuse himself, but to put them upon the proof of those accusations which were brought against him. But, from this instance of our Saviour's sufferings, we learn, That Christ did endure painful buffetings, ignominious and contemptuous usage, even from inferior servants: *giving his cheek to the smiters,* to testify that shame and reproachful usage which was deserved by us, and to sanctify that condition to us, whenever it is allotted for us. Observe, 2. The meek and gentle reproof which the Lord Jesus gives to this rude officer: he doth not strike him dead upon the place, nor cause that arm to wither which was stretched forth against the Lord's Anointed; but only lets him know, that there was no reason for his striking of him. Where note, That though our Saviour doth not revenge himself, yet he vindicates himself, and defends himself both with law and reason: *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* Hence we learn, 1. That we are not literally to understand the command, *Matt. v.* of turning the cheek to him that smites us. For Christ himself did not this, but defends the innocency of his words. 2. That to stand up in defence of our own innocency, is not contrary either to the duties of patience and forgiveness, or to the practice and example of our Lord Jesus. Note, 3. That when the soldier had struck Christ upon one cheek, he did not turn to him the other also, according to *Matt. v. 39.* Which evidently shows, that that precept,

*If they smite thee on one cheek, turn the other also,* commands only this, that rather than take revenge, we should bear a second injury. Christians ought rather to suffer a double wrong, than to seek a private revenge: christianity obliges us to bear many injuries patiently, rather than to avenge one privately. But though it binds up our hands from private revenge, yet it doth not shut our mouths from complaining to public authority. Christ's own practice here expounds the precept elsewhere, *Matt. v. 39.* For he complains here of the officer's injustice in smiting him before the judicatory, and challenges the man to bear witness of the evil. Observe lastly, How our Lord was not only buffeted, but bound, and sent bound from Annas to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod to Pilate again: and all this on foot through the streets of Jerusalem, from one end of the city to the other; partly to render his passion more public, being made a gazing-stock to the world, and a spectacle both to angels and men. And his condescending to go bound from one high-priest to another, and from one tribunal to another, teaches his people what delinquents they were before the tribunal of God, and what they deserved by reason of sin; even a sentence of eternal condemnation at the tribunal of the just and holy God.

28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early: and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover.

There were two courts of judicature which our blessed Saviour was brought before, and condemned by. 1. The ecclesiastical court or sanhedrim, in which the high-priest sat as judge; here he was condemned to death for blasphemy. 2. The civil court or judgment-hall, where Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, sat judge, who, because he was a Gentile, they would not go into his house, lest they should be defiled; for they accounted it a legal pollution to come into the house of a Gentile. Where observe, The notorious hypocrisy of these Jews: they scruple the defiling of themselves by coming near the judgment-hall, where Pilate sat, but make no scruple at all to defile themselves with the guilt of innocent blood which Pilate shed. W

persons are over zealous for ceremonial observations, they are oftentimes too remiss with reference to moral duties: *They brought him to the judgment-hall; but they themselves went not in, lest they should be defiled.*

29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? 30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

Observe here, 1. How Pilate humours these Jews in their superstition. They scruple to go into the judgment-hall to him; he therefore goes out to them, and demands what accusation they had against Christ. They charge him here only for being a malefactor, or an evil-doer in the general; but elsewhere (*Luke xxiii.*) they particularly accuse him, 1. "For perverting the nation." 2. "For forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar." 3. "For saying that he himself was Christ a king." All which was filthy calumny, yet Christ underwent the reproach of it without opening his mouth; teaching us, when we lie under calumny and unjust imputation, to imitate him, who opened not his mouth, but committed his cause to him that judgeth uprightly.

31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: 32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

The Jews being now under the power of the Romans, though they had a power of judging and censuring criminals in smaller matters, yet not in capital cases; they could not pronounce a sentence of death upon any person, say some; they might, and did, say others, punish blasphemers by stoning them to death; but then their sentence is to be ratified by the Roman power. Accordingly, here they had in their ecclesiastical court condemned Christ for blasphemy, now they bring him to Pilate the Roman governor to confirm the sentence of death. From hence it appears, That

Christ was the true Messiah, being sent into the world when the sceptre was departed from Judah, according to that ancient prophecy of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come.* The Jews had no power absolutely to condemn any man, or put him to death; but this power the Roman emperor reserved to his own deputy. This contributed towards the fulfilling of our Saviour's words, Matt. xx. 19. *That he should be delivered to the Gentiles, and should be crucified;* which was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment. Had the Jews put him to death, they had stoned him. But Christ was to be made a curse for us by hanging upon a tree; and accordingly the Jews execute the counsel of God, though they knew it not, by refusing to put him to death themselves. Learn hence, How willing Christ was to undergo a shameful, painful, and accursed death, that he might testify his love unto, and procure a blessing for, his people. Thus the saying of Jesus was fulfilled; which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? 34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? 35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done? 36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Observe here, 1. Pilate's ensnaring question, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* How jealous are great men of Jesus Christ, and how afraid are they of his kingdom, power, and authority, as if it would be prejudicial to their authority and power in the world; which was far enough from Christ's thoughts! Observe, 2. The wisdom and caution of our Saviour's answer: he neither affirms nor denies. Though whenever we speak we are bound to speak the truth, yet we are not bound at all times to speak the whole truth. Christ

tells him therefore, that, upon the supposition that he was a king, yet his kingdom was no earthly, but a spiritual kingdom; he was no temporal king, to rule over his subjects with temporal power and worldly pomp; but a spiritual king, in and over his church only, to order the affairs and look after the government thereof. Learn hence, That Christ as God hath an universal kingdom of power and providence even over the highest of men, and as a Mediator hath a spiritual kingdom in and over his church. 2. That it is a clear evidence that Christ's kingdom is spiritual, inasmuch as it is not carried on by violence and force of arms, as worldly kingdoms are, but by spiritual means and methods: *If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight for me: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate asks him again directly and expressly, *Art thou a king or not?* Our Saviour answers, *"Thou sayest that I am a king, and so it is indeed as thou sayest, I am a king, and the king of the Jews too; but not a temporal king, to rule over them after the manner of earthly kings with temporal power, and worldly pomp and splendour; but I am a spiritual king, to rule and govern, not only the Jews, but my whole church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, after a spiritual manner."* Observe here, 1. The dominion and sovereignty of Jesus Christ; he has a kingdom: *My kingdom.* Observe, 2. The condition and qualification of this kingdom, negatively expressed: *My kingdom is not of this world.* Observe, 3. The use and end of this kingdom: that the truth may have place among the children of men for their salvation: *To this end was I born, and came into the world, to bear witness unto the truth.* Observe, 4. The subjects of Christ's kingdom declared: *Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice;* that is, every one who is by divine grace disposed to believe and love the truth, will hear and obey Christ's doctrine.

38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all. 39 But ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Observe here, 1. The question Pilate put to Christ, *What is truth?* A most noble and important question, had it been put forth with an honest heart, with a mind fairly disposed for information and satisfaction; but it is evident, Pilate's enquiry was notorious; nay, it is generally thought that Pilate asked this question in scorn, contempt, and derision: for he stays not for our Lord's answer, but as soon as he started this query, went off the bench in haste. Learn hence, That his question, *What is truth?* or, how may we come to the knowledge of the truth? is of unspeakable use and importance, and a question whereon the whole frame and constitution of religion depends; because truth is claimed by all parties of men, by all professors of religion. Ask the different parties, from the old gentlemen at Rome to the poorest Quaker and Mungletonian, *Where is truth?* and they will all tell you, they are in possession of it. Every sect hath thus much of popery with it, that the professors of it think themselves infallible, and every one cries out, *Here is truth.* But God has given us a two-fold light to search for truth; namely, the light of reason, and the light of scripture, or divine revelation. The former Solomon calls the *candle of the Lord*, set up in our breast by God, on purpose to discover truth unto us. God allows us, yea, enjoins us, the free and impartial use of our understandings and judgments, in order to the finding out of divine truth; but because nature's light, or the light of natural reason, is not clear and bright enough to give us a prospect of supernatural truths; (for nature and reason can never dictate those things which depend only upon God's free grace and good pleasure, such as the doctrines of a Saviour and Redeemer, and the method of man's salvation by the sufferings of the Son of God: (it had been blasphemy once to have

supposed such things, had not God revealed them in scripture; therefore the second standard of divine truth, is the infallible word of God. The gospel of Christ is the way and the truth: *Truth came by Jesus Christ*. And would men be ruled and conducted by the unalterable standards of truth, namely, right reason and divine revelation, they would easily agree in their judgments what is to be believed, and all debates and controversies would vanish. Right reason and inspired scriptures are the best judges of controversies; they being the fixed standards and measures of divine truth, can best resolve Pilate's question here, and tell us *what is truth*. Observe here, How unwilling, how very unwilling, Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death: he came forth three several times, and tells the Jews that he finds no fault in him; he bids them take him, and judge him according to their law. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews, that heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, do condemn him. Observe, 3. Pilate having absolved Christ, *I find no fault in him*, endeavours next to release him, and takes occasion from their custom of having a prisoner released to them at their feast, to insinuate his desire that they should choose Christ: *Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the passover*. Observe lastly, How the Jews prefer Barabbas, a robber, before the holy and innocent Jesus: *They all cried out, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas*. Learn hence, That no persons, how wicked and vile soever, are so odious in the eyes of the enemies of God as Christ himself was, and his friends and followers now are: Christ did find it thus in his own person when on earth: Barabbas a robber was preferred before him; and now he is in heaven, he suffers in his members, the filth of the world being preferred before them.

## CHAP. XIX.

**T**HEN Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

Observe here, 1. That as the death of the cross was a Roman punishment, so it was the manner of the Romans, to whip their malefactors before they crucified them. Accordingly Pilate took Jesus, and scourged him. O! amazing sight, the great God of heaven and earth is lashed and scourged like

a base slave. Behold, hard-hearted sinner! the lashes wherewith thy Redeemer is cruelly tormented, were to preserve thee from the severer lashes of thine own accusing and condemning conscience, and to save thee from being lashed by the rage and fury of devils to all eternity. Observe, 2. How unwilling, how very unwilling, Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death: it is very evident that he had a mind to release him; and it is concluded, that Pilate was thus forward to scourge Christ, hoping that the Jews would have been satisfied with this lighter punishment, and so have dismissed him. From this instance we may gather, that hypocrites within the pale of the visible church, may be guilty of such tremendous acts of wickedness, as the conscience of an infidel and pagan may boggle at and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, and seeks to release him, whilst the hypocritical Jews, who had heard his doctrine and saw his miracles, condemn him. Observe, 3. How wretchedly Pilate suffers himself to be overcome with the Jews' importunity, and, contrary to the light of his own reason and conscience, delivers the holy and innocent Jesus, first to be scourged, and then crucified. Learn thence, That it is a vain apology for sin, when persons pretend that it was not committed with their own consent, but at the instigation and importunity of others: for such is the frame and constitution of man's soul, that none can make him either wicked or miserable, without his own consent: *Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him*.

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

Behold here, 1. The crown which they have prepared for him, a crown of thorns; and with great cruelty they press it closely to his sacred temples, whilst those sharp-pointed briars, piercing those tender parts, set out that blood, which in a short time was to be more freely poured forth for the redemption of captive souls. The next part of our Saviour's sufferings consisted of cruel mockings: Christ had owned himself to be the King of the Jews; that is, a spiritual king, in and over his church. But the Jews expecting that the Messiah should

have appeared in the pomp of an earthly prince, and finding it to be quite otherwise in our Saviour, they look upon him as a deceiver and impostor, and accordingly treat him as a mock-king, with all the marks of derision and scorn: for first they put a crown upon his head, but a very ignominious and painful one; *a crown of thorns*. They put a sceptre in his hand, but it was that of a reed; a robe of scarlet or purple upon his body; and then bowed their knees unto him, as they were wont to do before their princes, crying, Hail, King! Thus were all the marks of scorn imaginable put upon our dear Redeemer: yet what they did in jest, God permitted to be done in earnest; for all these things were ensigns and marks of sovereignty, and Almighty God caused the royal dignity of his Son to shine forth, even in the midst of his greatest abasement. Whence was all this jeering and sport, but to flout majesty? And why did the Son of God undergo all this ignominy, disgrace, and shame, but to show what was due unto us for our sins; as also to give us an example, to bear all the scorn, reproach, and shame imaginable, for the sake of him, who, for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame, as well as endured the cross? Verily, nothing was omitted that either the malice of men, or the rage of devils could possibly invent, either to torment or reproach him. But with what a lamb-like meekness, with what an astonishing patience, did he undergo all these trials, both for our good and in our stead!

4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. 5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! 6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him and crucify him; for I find no fault in him.

Observe here, 1. The great variety of our Saviour's sufferings: he is made the foot-ball of all cruelty and scorn; his sacred body is stript of his garments, and his back disguised with purple robes; his ten-

der temples wounded with a thorny crown; his face spit upon, his cheeks buffeted, his head smitten, his hand sceptred with a reed. By his wearing a crown of thorns, he took away the bitterness of that curse which our sins brought upon the earth, Gen. iii. 18. *Thorns and briars shall it bring forth*. Christ by his bitter and bloody suffering, has turned all the curses of his people into crowns and blessings. Observe, 2. The noble testimony given of Christ's innocence, by the mouth of Pilate: *I find in him no fault at all*. He doth not say, I find him not guilty of what is laid to his charge; but gives an universal testimony of our Lord's innocence: I find no fault at all in him. In spite of all malice, innocency shall find some friends and abettors. Rather than Christ shall want witnesses, Pilate's mouth was opened for his justification: how fain would he have freed Jesus, whom he found faultless! Our Lord found more compassion from Pilate, a pagan, than he did from them of his own nation. Pilate would have saved him, but they cry out for his blood. Hypocrites within the visible church may be guilty of such monstrous acts of wickedness, as the consciences of heathens without the church may boggle at, and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, pronounces Christ innocent; whilst the hypocritical Jews, who had heard his doctrine and seen his miracles, do condemn him. Observe, 3. Who influenced the main body of the Jews to desire Pilate to put Jesus to death; it was the chief priests and elders: *They persuaded the multitude*. Woe be to the common people, when their guides and leaders are corrupt; and woe be unto them much more, if they follow their wicked and pernicious counsels. The Jews here followed their guides, the chief priests; but it was their own destruction, as well as their leaders: *When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch*.

7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. 8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; And went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Observe here, 1. How ambitious the chief priests were that Christ should die

under a colour of law: *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die.* The law which they allude to, is the law for putting false prophets and blasphemers to death; of which number they conclude Christ to be, because he made himself the Son of God; whereas he did not make himself so, or only pretend to be so, but really and indeed was so; to wit, the eternal Son of God. Such as are indeed blasphemers, and do arrogate to themselves what is proper to God only, by the law of God they ought to be put to death: but Christ was not guilty of the violation of that law; for he was indeed the Son of God, and did not make himself so. Observe, 2. How full of fear the conscience of Pilate was, when the Jews told him that Jesus made himself the Son of God: he was afraid to condemn him, not knowing but that he might be some divine and extraordinary person, and consequently might draw down divine vengeance on his own head. Learn hence, That serious thoughts of a deity will strike terror even into a natural conscience, especially when the sinner is following a course which his own judgment cannot approve; when Pilate heard of Christ's being the Son of God, he was afraid, knowing what he had done to him was against his own conscience. Observe, 3. The question Pilate puts to Christ upon this occasion, *Whence art thou?* that is, What is thy original or parentage? Art thou a divine person or not? Our blessed Saviour being unwilling to obstruct his own sufferings, or to discover any thing that might hinder Pilate from proceeding against him, would give him no answer, having before made a reasonable and sufficient defence. O how ready Christ was to lay down his life for sinners, and how willing to pay that ransom for his people, which the justice of God required!

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? 11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Observe here, 1. How offended Pilate was at Christ's silence, and how unreason-

ably he boasts of his power and authority: *Have not I power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?* It is the great sin and snare of men in power, to forget from whom they derive their power, and to think that they may employ their power as they please. Observe, 2. The piety and meekness of our Saviour's answer: *Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.* That is, Thou hast no power over me, nor couldest thou inflict any punishment upon me, were it not that my Father hath in his great wisdom, divine counsel, and for glorious ends, permitted it so to be. Learn, That Christ's being under the power of any man, how great and eminent soever, did flow from the peculiar dispensation of God, who in his wise and wonderful counsel so ordered it, and ordained it for the redemption and salvation of his people; he was above all human power as God, and no ways obnoxious to Pilate's power, being a perfect innocent man. Observe, 3. How Christ charges his death more upon Judas and the Jews, than upon Pilate and the Gentiles: *He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.* Not that Pilate was excused from sin, in delivering Christ to be crucified: he sinned heinously in abusing his power; but Judas sinned more in delivering him up to the chief priests, and the chief priests in delivering him up to Pilate, than Pilate himself, whom they made a tool to serve their malice and revenge: they had better means of knowledge than he; and so sinned against more light than he; and consequently their guilt was greater, and their condemnation heavier, than his. Learn thence, that the greater means of light and knowledge persons sin against, the more aggravated is their guilt, and the more heightened will be their condemnation: *He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cesar. 13 When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat, in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

Still observe, how unwilling Pilate was to put Christ to death; conscience bids him spare, popularity bids him kill: how frequently and how fervently did he contend with the Jews, till they make it a state case, and tacitly accuse him for a traitor to the Roman emperor, if he released him: *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend.* When Pilate heard that, he delivers up the innocent Jesus to be crucified. Hence learn, That the natural consciences of men, and the innate notions of good and evil, may carry men on a great way in opposing that which is bare-faced iniquity; but at last, either fear or shame will overrule, if there be not a superior and more noble principle. Though Pilate's conscience acquitted Christ, and his mouth had declared that he had found no fault at all in him, yet fear of Cesar's displeasure causes him to deliver to death the holiest and best of men, against his judgment and his conscience: *When Pilate heard that, he brought Jesus forth unto them.*

14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king! 15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cesar. 16 Then delivered he him, therefore, unto them to be crucified.—

Observe here, How careful the Holy Ghost is to record and set down the time when Pilate gave sentence against Christ. In general, it was on the day of the preparation for the passover; that is, the day immediately before it, when they prepared every thing needful for the solemnization: and, in particular, it was about the sixth hour of that day. St. Mark calls it the third hour, St. John the sixth; but this is easily reconciled thus: the Jews divided the day into four quarters, which they called hours; the first was called the third hour, which answers to our ninth; the second, called the sixth hour, answering to our twelfth: the third, called the ninth hour, answering our three in the afternoon: the fourth, called the twelfth hour, which was the time of their retirement from labour, and beginning of the first night watch. Now the whole time from the third hour

to the sixth, that is, from nine to twelve, was called the third hour; and the whole intervening time from the sixth to the ninth, that is, from twelve to three, is called the sixth hour; and so of the rest. Now when St. John says, it was about the sixth hour when Christ was condemned by Pilate, and led away to be crucified, and St. Mark says it was the third hour, we are to understand, that St. Mark takes in the whole time of the third hour, from nine to twelve; and St. John saying it was about the sixth hour, implies that it was near twelve; so that between the hours of nine and twelve our Lord was sentenced, and led away to his cross; about twelve, fastened to his cross, upon which he hung till the ninth hour, that is, till about three in the afternoon; during which time there was such an eclipse of the sun, as did occasion darkness over all the earth. Learn hence, The great love and condescension of Christ, in stooping so low, to have his sufferings lengthened out upon our accounts, to expiate our guilt, which deserveth eternal sufferings: that he might, by his example, warn us to prepare for trials of long continuance, and sanctify a state of continual affliction to us. Behold the Son of God harassed all night before he suffered, hurried from place to place, posted backward and forward, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod to Pilate, wearied, scourged, buffeted, crowned with thorns, at last nailed to his cross, and hanging thereupon from about twelve to three, in exquisite torture of body, and under the sense of his Father's wrath in his soul. O Lord! thy kindness towards us is matchless and inimitable; never was love like thine.

—And they took Jesus, and led him away. 17 And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called *the place* of a scull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha; 18 Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Observe here, 1. That it was a custom among the Romans to cause the person condemned to crucifying, to carry his own cross; accordingly our Saviour bare his own cross part of the way, till fainting under the burden of it, they laid it upon another, not out of mercy, but malice, reserving him for a more public death; they

were loath he should go away in a fainting fit. But why could not Christ bear his own cross, who was able to bear the sins of the whole world, when hanging upon the cross ? Answer, 1. Probably, the Jews' malice provided him a cross of an extraordinary greatness, proportionable to the crimes they charged him with. 2. He was much debilitated and weakened with his long watching and sweating the night before. 3. The sharp edges of the cross grating his late whipped and galled shoulders, might occasion the fresh bleeding of his wounds, and his weakening thereby. 4. Hereby he gave the world a demonstration of the truth of his humanity, that he was in all things like unto us, with respect to his human nature and the common infirmities of that nature. Herein, like Isaac, Christ cheerfully carried the wood on which he was to be offered up a sacrifice to divine justice. Observe, 2. The infamous company which our holy Lord suffered with, two thieves ; on either side one, and himself in the midst : it had been a sufficient disparagement to our blessed Redeemer, to be sorted with the best of men ; but to be numbered with the scum of mankind, is such an indignity as confounds our thoughts. This was designed by the Jews to dishonour and disgrace our Saviour the more, and to persuade the world that he was the greatest of offenders. But God overruled this, for fulfilling an ancient prophecy concerning the Messiah, Isa. liii. ult. *And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 This title then read many of the Jews : for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city : and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. 21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews ; but that he said, I am the King of the Jews. 22 Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.

Observe here, 1. The inscription wrote by Pilate over our suffering Saviour : *This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.* It was the manner of the Romans, when they crucified a malefactor, to pub-

lish the cause of his death in capital letters over his head, that so the equity of their proceedings might more clearly appear to the people. Now it is observable how wonderfully the wisdom of God overruled the heart and pen of Pilate to draw this title, which was truly honourable, and fix it to his cross. Pilate, who before was his judge, and pronounced him innocent, is now his herald to proclaim his glory. Learn hence, That the regal dignity of Christ was openly proclaimed by an enemy, and that in the time of his greatest reproaches and sufferings. Pilate, without his own knowledge, did our Saviour an eminent piece of service ; he did that for Christ, which none of his own disciples durst do ; not designedly, but from the special overruling providence of God. No thanks to Pilate for all this ; because the highest services performed to Christ undesignedly, shall neither be accepted nor rewarded by God. Observe, 2. How the Jews endeavour to alter this : *Write not, The king of the Jews : but that he said, I am king of the Jews.* The Jews thought it would be a disgrace to them, that Christ should be reported abroad to have been their king, therefore they desire an alteration of the writing. But Pilate, that wrote in honour of Christ, stiffly defends what he had done : to all their importunity he returns this resolute answer, *What I have written, I have written.* Surely the constancy of Pilate, at this time, must be attributed to special divine providence. How wonderful was it, that he who before was as inconstant as a reed, should now be fixed as a pillar of brass ! Whence is this, but from the God of spirits moving upon his spirit to write, and to defend what was written ? The providence of God hath a prospect beyond the understanding of all creatures.

23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part ; and also his coat : now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout : 24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be : that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.



Here we have recorded our Saviour's sufferings from the soldiers; they stript him of his garments, before they fastened him to his cross, and divided those garments which could be parted amongst them, and cast lots on his woven coat which could not be divided. Little did these vile soldiers think that they were now fulfilling a scripture prophecy; yet so it was, this action of theirs being foretold, Psalm xxii. 18. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.* Not that the prophecy made them do it, but was fulfilled by their doing of it. From hence we may gather, that Christ suffered naked upon the cross, as naked, say some, as he came into the world. We had made ourselves naked to our shame, and Christ became naked to cover our shame. If, sensible of our own nakedness and shame, we flee unto him by faith, we shall be clothed with robes of righteousness, and garments of everlasting praise.

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

These words contain our Saviour's affectionate recommendation of his distressed mother to the care of a dear disciple. It was an argument of Christ's wonderful love to her, that when he was nailed to the cross, and ready to die, he was more concerned for his mother's sorrows than for his own sufferings. Now was Simeon's prophecy fulfilled, Luke ii. 35. *A sword shall pass through thine own soul also.* Her soul was pierced for him, both as his natural mother, and also as a mystical member of him her head; therefore Christ applies these comfortable words as a salve to her wounds, even whilst his own were bleeding unto death. *Woman, behold thy son.* Where note, He calls her *Woman*, and not mother: he doth not say, Mother, behold thy son; but, *Woman*, behold him. Not that Christ was ashamed of, or unwilling to own her as his mother; but either, 1.

Fearing that calling her by that name should augment and increase her grief and trouble. Or else, 2. To intimate his change of state and condition, that being ready to die and return to his Father in heaven, he was above all earthly relations, and knew no one after the flesh, no, not his very mother; yet, see at the same time, when he was above her, and about to leave her, how his care manifested itself for her, when his soul and body were full of anguish to the very brim; yet all this makes him not in the least unmindful of so dear a relation. Thence learn, That Christ's tender care of his mother, even in the time of his greatest distress, is an excellent pattern for all children to imitate and follow to the end of the world. St. John here obeyed Christ's command, and imitated his example: he took her to his own home; that is, he treated her with all that dutiful regard which a tender and indulgent mother challenges from a pious and obedient son. No personal trial or trouble upon ourselves doth exempt us from the performance of our duty towards others, especially towards our near and dear relations; Christ, in the extremity of his sufferings, accounted it his duty to take care of and provide for his dear mother; *teaching us by his example that children ought to evidence that they honour their parents, by taking care of them in their decayed and desolate condition.* Again, inasmuch as St. John took care of the holy mother after her dear son's death; *that disciple took her to his own home;* we learn, That the Lord never removes one comfort, and takes away the means of subsistence from his people, but he raises up another in the room of it. It is very probable that Joseph her husband was before this time dead, and Jesus her son was now dying; but still God provides; he raises up St. John to take care of her; he takes her to his own home, and looks upon her as one of his family. But how comes St. John above the rest to have this honourable service put upon him, and this high trust reposed in him? Answer, the text tells us, *he was the disciple whom Jesus loved;* that is, in a more particular manner, treating him with greater freedom and familiarity than the rest; he also evidenced more love unto, and more courage and resolution for, Christ, than the rest of the disciples, he standing by the cross, when they got afar off, *Mark* xv. 50. Thence we learn, That such as are beloved of Christ, as do keep close unto him, and express most zeal and resolution

for him, shall be peculiarly honoured by him, and be employed in the highest services for him.

28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. 29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar : and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

Observe here, 1. The affliction or suffering which our Saviour complained of, and that is, thirst ; there are two sorts of thirst, the one natural and proper, the other spiritual and figurative ; Christ felt both at this time. His body thirsted by reason of those agonies which it laboured under. His soul thirsted in vehement desires, and fervent longings, to accomplish that great and difficult work he was now about. 2. The design and end of our Lord's complaint : *That the scripture might be fulfilled, he said, I thirst.* Our Saviour finding that all was accomplished, which he was to do before his death, but only the fulfilling that one scripture, Psal. lxxix. 21. *They gave me vinegar to drink ;* he, for the accomplishment thereof, said, *I thirst.* Whence note, That such were the agonies and extreme sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, that they drank up his very spirits, and made him cry, *I thirst.* 2. That when Christ cried out, *I thirst,* it was to show, that whatever was foretold by the prophets concerning him, was exactly accomplished, and even to a circumstance fulfilled in him : *That the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus saith, I thirst.*

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished : and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Observe here, 1. Our Lord's last words, *It is finished.* 2. His last act, *He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.* As to the former, his last words, *It is finished,* this might be the probable intendment of it : 1. *It is finished ;* that is, now is my Father's eternal counsel concerning me accomplished, and now is the promise that he made of my becoming a sacrifice for sin fulfilled ; both my Father's purpose and my Father's promise are now receiving their

final accomplishment. 2. *It is finished ;* that is, the scriptures are now fulfilled ; all the types that did prefigure me, all the prophetic predictions that were made of me, all the Jewish sacrifices that pointed at me, have now received their final accomplishment in me, and are abolished in my death. 3. *It is finished,* that is, my sufferings are now ended, my race is run, my work is done, I am now putting my last hand to it, my death is before me, I have finished the work, the whole work, which I came into the world for, doing as well as dying ; all is upon the matter completed, it is just finishing, it will be instantly finished. Again, 4. *It is finished :* that is, the fury and malice, the rage and revenge of my enemies, is now ended, they have done their worst ; the chief priests and soldiers, the judges and witnesses, the executioners and tormentors, have all tired out themselves with the exercise of their own malice ; but now their spite and spleen, their envy and enmity, is ended, and the Son of God is at rest. 5. *It is finished :* that is, the glorious work of man's redemption and salvation is perfected and performed, consummated and completed, the price is paid, satisfaction is given, redemption is purchased, and salvation insured to a miserable world. Woe unto us, if Christ had left but one farthing of our debt to the justice of God unpaid ; we must have lain in hell to all eternity, as being insolvent ; but Christ has by one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ hath perfected, and completely finished, the great work of redemption committed to him by God the Father. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's last act : *He bowed his head and gave up the ghost.* Whence learn, The spontaneity and voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, how freely he surrendered to death ; his soul was not rent from him, but yielded up to God by him ; Christ was a volunteer in dying ; though his death was a violent death, yet it was a voluntary sacrifice ; *He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day, (for that sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 Then came the

soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. 35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. 36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

These verses contain several remarkable passages tending to the confirmation of our faith, in the belief of the certainty and reality of our Saviour's death: in which the Jews, the soldiers, and St. John, do all give their several and sufficient evidences. Observe, 1. The Jews' part in clearing up his truth: they desire Pilate (who had power alone to dispose of the dead bodies of condemned persons) that the legs of the crucified persons might be broken to hasten their death, that so they might be taken away, and buried; because according to the law, (*Deut. xxi. 22, 23.*) the land was defiled with those that were hanged, if not timely buried: and they judged if the bodies of these persons did remain on the cross all that night, and the next sabbath-day, *which was an high day*, (the ordinary-sabbath, and the first day of the passover, or feast of unleavened bread, meeting together,) it might pollute both them and their feast. Whence note the cursed hypocrisy of these Jews; they look upon themselves as strictly bound to observe an outward ceremony, but their consciences never scruple to violate the most weighty precepts of the moral law; they strictly observe the ceremonial precept, that the dead bodies should not remain upon the cross, but they scruple not to crucify the Son of God, and to use him with the utmost rigour, desiring his bones may be broken. Observe, 2. The soldiers' part contributed to clear the truth of Christ's death: they execute what the Jews had desired, and Pilate granted, breaking the legs of the two thieves, but not of Jesus, because he was already dead; but one of the soldiers resolving to

make sure work, thrusts a spear into his side, and there came out straightway blood and water, proving that he was really dead. All which points out to us, that it is he who came by water and blood, 1 *John v. 6.* and that from the merit and efficacy of his death, there floweth out blood for the obtaining remission of sin, and water to regenerate and wash us from our uncleanness. From the barbarous soldier's piercing of Christ's side after he was dead, we learn, That no cruelty was omitted to Christ either dead or alive, which might testify the great desert of our sin, nor was there any needful evidence wanting which might make clear the truth of his death; the soldiers' piercing of our Saviour's side was at once an exercise of their cruelty, and an evidence of the certainty of Christ's death. Observe, 3. St. John's part in this evidence: he avouches, That Christ really died, and expressly affirms that he saw it with his own eyes, for the confirmation of our faith: *He that saw it bare record, and his record is true.* And farther shows that by these actions of the soldiers, *that was done by which several scripture prophecies were fulfilled*, and received their accomplishment; particularly, that of *Erod. xii. 46.* concerning the paschal lamb, which was a type of Christ, *That a bone of it should not be broken*; and that prediction, *Zech. xii. 10. They shall look on him whom they have pierced.* Learn hence, That Christ is the truth and substance of that type, the paschal lamb, mentioned, *Erod. xii.* and the true passover sacrificed for us; therefore what was ordained concerning the paschal lamb, is applied here to Christ, as the substance of that type: *A bone of him shall not be broken.*

38 And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, (being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,) besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. 40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. 41

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. 42 There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' preparation-day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

This last paragraph of the chapter gives us an account of our Lord's honourable burial; such a funeral as never was since graves were first digged. Where observe, 1. Our Lord's body must be begged before it could be buried, the dead bodies of malefactors being in the power and at the disposal of the judge: Pilate grants it; and accordingly the dead body is taken dead, wrapped in fine linen, and prepared for the sepulchre. Observe, 2. The persons who bestowed this honourable burial upon Christ: Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus; the one provided fine linen, and the other fine spices, and they jointly wound and embalmed his body after the Jewish manner; both of them worthy, though close, disciples: grace doth not always make a public and open show where it is; but as there is much secret treasure unseen in the bowels of the earth, so is there much grace in the hearts of some saints, which the world takes little notice of. We read of none of the apostles at Christ's funeral; fear had put them to flight; but Joseph and Nicodemus appeared boldly. If God strengthen the weak, and leave the strong to the prevalency of their own fears, the weak shall be as David, and the strong as tow. Observe, 3. The grave or sepulchre in which our Lord was buried: it was a *sepulchre in a garden*, to expiate Adam's sin committed in a garden: as by the sin of the first Adam we were driven out of paradise, the garden of pleasure; so by the sufferings of a second Adam, who lay buried in a garden, we may hope for entrance into the heavenly paradise. And it was in a *new sepulchre*, wherein never any man was laid, lest his adversaries should say, it was another that was risen, who was buried there before; or, that he arose as one of the old prophets did, by touching the bones of some other dead person. Observe, 4. The manner of our Lord's funeral: it was hasty, public, and decent. It was hasty, by reason of the straitness of time; the sabbath was approaching, and all business is laid aside to prepare for that. Teaching us, How much it is our duty to despatch our

worldly business early on the eve of the Lord's day; that we may be the better prepared to sanctify that day. Again, our Lord's funeral was public, and open; all persons that would, might be spectators, to cut off occasion from any to object, that there was deceit and fraud used in or about our Lord's burial; yet was he also interred decently, his holy body being wrapt in fine linen, and perfumed with spices, according to the Jewish custom. Observe, 5. The reasons why our Lord was thus buried, seeing he was to rise again in as short a time as other men lie by the walls: doubtless it was to declare the certainty of his death, and the reality of his resurrection, to fulfil the types and prophecies which went before of him; as *Jonah being three days and three nights in the whale's belly*. He was also buried to complete his humiliation, this being the lowest step to which he could descend in his abased state. Finally, He went into the grave, that he might conquer death in its own territories. Observe lastly, Of what use our Lord's burial is to us his followers. It shows us the amazing depth of his humiliations, from what and to what his love brought him, even from the bosom of his Father to the bosom of the grave. It may also comfort us against the fears of death; the grave could not long keep Christ; it shall not always keep us; it was a loathsome prison before, it is a perfumed bed now: he whose head is in heaven, need not to fear to put his feet into the grave. Awake, and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust, for the enmity of the grave is slain by Christ.

## CHAP. XX.

This and the following chapter give us an account of our Saviour's exaltation and victorious triumph over all his enemies, by his powerful resurrection. All the four evangelists do confirm the truth of it, by recording the several steps and degrees of the manifestation of it. In this chapter Christ's resurrection is confirmed first to Mary Magdalene, next to Peter and John, then to all the disciples except Thomas.

**T**HE first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

In this verse is recorded how Mary Magdalene came early to the sepulchre, on the first day of the week, to anoint the dead body of our Lord Jesus. Where note, That though her heart did burn with an ar-

dent zeal and affection to her crucified Lord, yet the commanded duties of the sabbath were not omitted by her; she kept close, and silently spent that holy day in a mixture of grief and hope. Her example is a good pattern of sabbath sanctification, and worthy of our christian imitation. Note, 2. What magnanimity and courage is found in this weak woman; she followed Christ courageously, when his disciples left him cowardly; she accompanied him to his cross, she followed his hearse to the grave, when his disciples durst not appear; and now very early in the morning she goes to visit his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the presence of the watchmen. Learn thence, That courage is the special gift of God, and if he gives it to the feeble sex, even to timorous and fearful women, it is not in the power of man to make them afraid.

2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

It was a great honour that God put upon this poor woman, Mary Magdalene, that she has the first notice of our Saviour's resurrection, and is the first that discovers it to the apostles. But why had not the Virgin Mary, his disconsolate mother, this privilege conferred on her, rather than Mary Magdalene, who had been a grievous sinner? Doubtless this was for the comfort of all true penitents, and administers great consolation to them: as the angels in heaven rejoice, much more doth Christ joy in the recovery of one repenting sinner, than in multitudes of holy and just persons, (such was the blessed Virgin,) who need no repentance.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. 4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. 5 And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying: yet went he not in. 6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and

seeth the linen clothes lie; 7 And the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. 8 Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

Here observe, 1. How Peter and John, moved with Mary Magdalene's words, *They have taken away the Lord, &c.* do run to the sepulchre to satisfy themselves in the truth of it. Such as sincerely love Christ, upon the least intimation that he is missing, bestir themselves with great activity and diligence, that they may see him, or hear of him: Peter and John run to the sepulchre, to see what was become of their holy Master. Observe, 2. That there was such a clear evidence about Christ's grave, as made it apparent that he was indeed risen from the dead, and not conveyed away either by friends or foes: it cannot be supposed that any of his friends (could they have come at it) would have so handled his holy body, as to carry it away naked; and as for his foes, had they stole away the body, they would never have left the fine linen behind them. Observe, 3. That when Christ arose from the grave, he left his grave-clothes behind him; whereas when Lazarus arose, he came forth with his grave-clothes about him. It teaches us, That Christ rose never to die more, but to live and reign for ever; therefore he left his grave-clothes in the grave, as never to make use of them more. But Lazarus was to die again, death once more was to have dominion over him; he therefore came forth with his grave-clothes about him. Observe lastly, How ignorant the apostles were of the doctrine of Christ's resurrection and of the holy scriptures, which declared he was to rise again from the dead: *They knew not the scriptures*; that is, they did not heed and regard them, ponder them in their hearts, and feed upon them by faith.

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. 11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into

the sepulchre, 12 And seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Here we have a description of the great love of Mary Magdalene, which she expressed towards Christ after his resurrection; she went to his sepulchre early, when it was yet dark; she hastily calls the disciples Peter and John, to the sepulchre; and she stays behind weeping at the sepulchre when they were gone away to their own home. And as Mary first sought him, and longest sought him, so she first found him. Here note, 1. Mary's carriage and behaviour towards her Saviour: that is discovered by her patient attendance, *She stood without at the sepulchre*; by her passionate mourning, she stood at the sepulchre *weeping*; by her unwearied diligence, *She stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre*. Here was great love indeed in this poor woman; a love stronger than death; a love which did outstrip and go beyond the greatest apostles. Learn thence, 1. That true love to Christ suffers not itself to be stinted or limited, no, not by the greatest examples; the weakest woman that truly loves Christ, may piously strive with the greatest apostle in this point: though he be learner, wiser, more useful, and more eminent than any of us, yet it is holy and wise not to suffer ourselves to be exceeded by any in our love to Christ; every christian may strive to exceed any one in grace, and to attain the highest place in the kingdom of heaven. Learn, 2. That strong love is valiant and undaunted, it will grapple and encounter with the strongest opposition; Mary fears nothing in seeking of her Lord, neither the darkness of the night, nor the terror of the soldiers, nor the malice of the Jews; love is as strong as death, and the flames thereof are vehement. Note farther, The success of Mary Magdalene's love to Christ, and unwearied attendance on his sepulchre; she found not the dead body of Christ, and it is well she did not; for if death could have held him, it would not have let him go. But though she found not her Lord in the grave, she found two of his servants there, two angels. Of all things in the world, one would have least expected to find an angel in the grave, spirits in the place of dead bodies, and immortality in the place of corruption. But from hence we learn, That such as sincerely

seek the Lord, shall certainly find, if not the very thing which they seek, yet that which is much fitter and better for them; Mary did not find Christ's dead body, but she finds that which is more comfortable for her to find, namely, two angels, to testify that he was risen. Where note, the posture of these angels described; the one sitting at the head, the other at the feet. It is a matter of comfort to the members of Christ, that angels do not wait upon the head only; but upon the feet also; and it ought to be matter of imitation also. Let us imitate our blessed Saviour in having an angel not at our head only, but at our feet also. Many have an ambition to have an angel at their head, a great measure of light and knowledge there, but they care not for an angel at their feet, they delight not to walk answerably to their light and knowledge, they have an angelical understanding and a diabolical conversation; it is sad for a man to have all his religion in his brain and tongue, and nothing in his heart and life.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. 14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

Observe here, 1. That the best company in the world will not satisfy or content such as are seeking for Jesus Christ, when they find not him whom their souls seek: Mary now enjoyed the presence and company of two angels, but this did not satisfy her in the absence of Christ himself. Observe, 2. How passionately did Mary mourn for the loss and want of Christ's bodily presence, thereby giving testimony of her great affection towards him; but truly our love to Christ is best shown, not by our passionate desires for his bodily presence, but by our holy longings after his spiritual presence in his word and ordinances here on earth, and

his blessed and immediate presence in heaven. Observe, 3. How Christ may be present with, and very near unto, his people, and yet not be presently discerned by them: *Jesus stood by Mary, but she knew not that it was Jesus.* Her not expecting a living Christ, was one cause why she did not discern him. Observe, 4. How exceedingly Mary's thoughts were taken up with Christ; she saith to the gardener, *If thou have borne him hence. What him?* She doth not say whom, but her heart was so taken up with Christ, and her mind so full of him, that she concluded every body would understand whom she meant, though she did not say whom she meant. Hence note, That the soul of a sincere believer is full of earnest and longing desires after Jesus Christ. 2. That such a soul is yet sometimes at a loss for Christ, and cannot tell where to find him. 3. That whilst the soul is at a loss for Christ, its desires are often quicker and more stirring after Christ. This was the case of Mary here; with the spouse by night on her bed, and early in the morning, she sought him whom her soul loved.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. 17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.

In the former of these verses, Christ makes himself known to Mary, and calleth her by her name. In the latter he gives her a prohibition and injunction. Observe, 1. The prohibition, *Touch me not*; together with the reason of it, *For I am not yet ascended to my Father.* It is concluded by interpreters, that Mary Magdalene was now fallen at Christ's feet, and embraced them; that having found him whom her soul loved, she hugs him now, and hangs about him; but Christ forbids any farther embracing, and rejects such testimonies of her love: as if he had said, Although I will allow you as much familiarity as shall satisfactorily convince you of the verity of my resurrection, yet you must not expect to converse with me in the bodily manner which you did before my death; for I am ascending to my Father, and must be enjoyed no longer after a

corporeal, but spiritual, manner. Learn hence, That our love to Jesus Christ is best shown, not by our human passionate affections to his bodily presence, but by our spiritual communion with him by faith here on earth, in order to an immediate communion with him face to face in heaven. Christ now after his resurrection was advanced to a more spiritual condition, therefore refuses at Mary's hand the offices of human conversation, but expects of her the duties and services of spiritual devotion. Observe, 2. Christ's injunction: *But go to my brethren, and say, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.* Where note, The endearing title given to the disciples, *my brethren.* He had before his death called them his servants, his friends, his children; but now, after his resurrection, he calls them his brethren: he became our brother by assuming our nature in his incarnation, he continues our brother by resuming that nature at his resurrection. Note farther, That Christ calls his disciples, brethren, after his exaltation and resurrection; thereby showing, that the change of his condition had wrought no change in his affection towards his poor disciples; but those that were his brethren before, in the time of his humiliation and abasement, are so still, after his exaltation and advancement: *Go to my brethren, and say, &c.* Humility doth not only go before honour, but dwells with honour, and doth evermore accompany it. Observe lastly, The good news or message of joy which Christ sends by Mary to his dear disciples; *Say, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*; as if nature and adoption gave the same interest. Christ calls God his God, and his disciples' God, his Father and their Father; first his and then theirs, and therefore theirs because his. Learn hence, That God for Christ's sake hath dignified believers with that near and dear relation of his being a Father to them in and through his Son; so that as they ought to carry it towards him like children by obedience, subjection, and resignation, so they may expect that he will retain a fatherly affection towards them, and they may expect from him fatherly compassion, provision, protection, correction, and all things needful. Lastly, remark from Christ's saying, *I go to my God and your God*, the false inferences of the Socinians, viz. That because Christ styled God his God, hence, say they, it is evident that Christ is not

God : but from these words it only follows, that he was not God according to that nature which ascended. Thus *Psalm, xlv.* it is said of Christ, *God even thy God hath anointed thee :* and yet he adds of the same person, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.*

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her. 19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, *Peace be unto you.* 20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his hands and his side.* Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

Our blessed Saviour's first appearing after his resurrection having been to Mary Magdalene, as the former verses acquainted us, the same day at evening, when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus miraculously, and, as to the disciples, insensibly opens the door, and stands in the midst of them, and says, *Peace be unto you :* and shows them his hands and his side. Where note, 1. That it has been no strange thing in the church, that the best members of it have been put to frequent their assemblies with great fear, and been forced to meet in the night with great caution, because of the fury of the persecutors : here Christ's own disciples were forced to meet together in the night, the doors kept shut, *for fear of the Jews.* Note, 2. Let Christ's disciples meet together never so privately, and with never so much hazard and jeopardy, they shall have Christ's company with them ; neither bolts, nor locks, nor fastened doors, shall hold Christ from them ; *When the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them.* Observe lastly, The evidence which our Saviour offers to evince and prove the certainty of his resurrection : *He showed his disciples his hands and side.* Christ appealed to, and admitted of, the judgment of their senses, to assure them that was the real body. And if we must not be allowed to believe our senses, (as the Romish synagogue would persuade us,) we

shall want the best external evidence we can have to prove the truth of the christian religion ; namely, the miracles of our Saviour ; for how can we be assured those miracles were true, but by the judgment of our senses ? Now as our senses tell us that Christ's miracles were true, so they assure us that the popish doctrine of transubstantiation is false.

21 Then said Jesus to them again. *Peace be unto you :* as *my Father hath sent me,* even so send I you. 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them,* and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. 23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them : *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

Observe here, 1. The repetition of our Saviour's endearing salutation to his disciples, *Peace be unto you, Peace be unto you.* This was no more than might be needful, to signify his firm reconciliation to them, notwithstanding their late cowardice in forsaking him, and flying from him, when the storm fell upon him. Observe, 2. How Christ doth renew his disciples' commission for the work of the ministry, who possibly were much discouraged with the remembrance of their faint-heartedness in the time of his sufferings ; he doth therefore anew commissionate them, and sends them forth in these words, *As my Father hath sent me :* that is, to preach, plant, and propagate the gospel ; *so send I you.* By the same authority, and for the same ends, in part, for which I was sent by my Father, do I send you ; namely, to gather, to govern, and instruct my church. Learn hence, That when Christ left the world, he did not leave the church destitute of a gospel ministry, which shall continue to the end of the world. As Christ was sent by the Father, so are his ministers sent by him : and they may expect, he having the same authority and commission, the same success and blessing ; and the contempt cast upon them and their message, ultimately reflects upon God and Christ, whose messengers they are. Observe, 3. How Christ that sends them forth, doth furnish them with the gifts of the Spirit for their office : *He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost :* that is, the gift of the Holy Ghost,



They had received the Holy Spirit before as a spirit of sanctification : here they receive it in his extraordinary gifts to fit them for their office. And Christ's conferring the Holy Ghost, by breathing upon them, shows that the Holy Spirit proceeds as well from the Son as from the Father. And as by God's breathing the first man was made a living soul ; so by Christ's breathing on the apostles they were quickened and extraordinarily enabled for the service they were called to. Learn hence, That when Christ sends forth any about his work, he will furnish them with endowments answerable to their vast employment ; and the best furniture they can have, is the Holy Spirit in his gifts and qualifications suitable to their work : *He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* Observe, 4. How Christ asserts their authority in the discharge of their commission, and declares, That what they act ministerially, according to their commission here on earth, is ratified in heaven : *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted.* Where note, That there is a two-fold power of remitting or forgiving sins ; the one magisterial and authoritative, (this belongs to Christ alone ; ) the other ministerial and declarative, (this belongs to Christ's ambassadors, who have a power in his name to bind and loose.) It is a pious note of St. Austin upon this place, That Christ first conferred the Holy Ghost upon his apostles, and then said, *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted.* Thereby intimating, that it is not they, but the Holy Ghost by them, that puts away sin : *For who can forgive sin but God only ?* The power of forgiving sin, that man hath, is only to declare, that if men be truly and really penitent, their sins are forgiven them for the sake of Christ's satisfaction.

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came, 25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

What the cause of Thomas's absence was is not declared ; it is evident that he was not with the rest of the disciples when

Christ appeared to them ; and his absence had like to have cost him dear, even the loss of his faith ; and he might have had cause for ever to have bewailed his absence from that meeting of the disciples, had not Christ been more merciful. Learn hence, That the letting slip of one holy opportunity, may prove exceedingly prejudicial to the soul's advantage : it is wise and safe to lay hold upon every opportunity for enjoying communion with God, and fellowship with his saints. Thomas's absence deprived him not only of the good news which Mary brought of Christ's being risen, but also of the sight of him, which the other disciples got by assembling together : and for want thereof Thomas is left under many doubts and fears. Verily, we know not what we lose, when we absent ourselves from the assembly of God's people. Such views of a crucified raised Jesus may be communicated to others whilst we are absent, as would have confirmed our faith, and established our joy, had we been present. Observe farther, What a strange declaration Thomas makes of his obstinate unbelief ; *Except I see the print of the nails, and put my finger into his side, I will not believe.* Where note, How strangely rooted unbelief is in the hearts of holy men, insomuch that they desire the objects of faith should fall under the view of their senses. Thomas carries his faith at his fingers' ends ; he will believe no more than he can see or feel ; whereas *faith is the evidence of things not seen.* O ! Thomas, how deplorable had been thy case, if Christ had never given thee that proof, which was very unreasonable for thee to expect ! But Christ takes compassion on him, and appears to him, and cures his obstinate unbelief, which he might have justly punished, as appears by the following verses.

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side : and be not faithless, but believing.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's appearing again to his disciples after his resurrection ; it was eight days after he first arose, which was the first day of the week. Here note,

That Christ's rising the first day of the week, and appearing on the next first day of the week after to the disciples, and the observing that day for their solemn assemblies, and St. Paul administering on that day the Lord's supper, *Acts xx.* and commanding on that day collections for the poor, *1. Cor. xvi.* and St. John calling it the *Lord's day.* *Rev. i. 10.* From these authorities, and the primitive practice, we derive our christian sabbath; for we do not find in all the scripture, one instance of any one congregation of christians only assembling upon the Jewish sabbath, but on the first day of the week; on which we ground our observation of that day. Observe, 2. The wonderful condescension of Christ to the weakness of Thomas's faith: he bids him *reach forth his hand, and thrust it into his side.* Not that Christ was pleased with, but only pitiful towards, Thomas's infirmities; and it ought to be no encouragement to any person to follow his example, in seeking or expecting the like signs of their own prescribing for helping of their faith. Observe, 3. How mercifully Christ overruled Thomas's unbelief, for the confirmation of our faith. His doubting, proved a means for establishing his own and our faith; therefore says Gregory well, *Plus mihi profuit dubitatio Thomæ quam credulitas Mariæ:* "Had not Thomas doubted, we had not been so fully assured, that it was the same Christ that was crucified who rose again."

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

These words may be considered two ways. 1. As an abrupt speech, importing a vehement admiration of Christ's mercy towards him, and of his own stupidity and dulness to believe. Learn hence, That the convincing condescension of Christ turns unbelief into a rapture of holy admiration and humble adoration. 2. This expression of Thomas, *My Lord and my God,* contains a short, but absolute, confession of faith. Thomas rightly collects from this resurrection, that he was Lord, *God blessed for evermore,* the true *Messias,* the expected Redeemer, and accordingly with an explicit faith he now professes his interest in him, saying, *My Lord and my God.* Yet note, That this resurrection could not make him God, and render him then the object of divine worship, if he had been

only a creature before. And farther observe, That Christ doth not reprove Thomas for owning him as God, which shows that Thomas did not mistake in owning the divinity of Christ.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.

Here we have Christ's reprehension of Thomas for not believing without such sensible evidence as he desired. He believed now that Christ was risen from the dead, but it was upon the testimony of his senses only. Therefore Christ tells him, that his faith would have been more excellent and more eminently rewardable, if he had believed without such demonstrative evidence: *Faith is the evidence of things not seen.* Therefore to give credit to a thing upon the evidence of a sense, is not properly believing. Observe farther, How Christ pronounces them blessed, who should hereafter believe on him through the preaching of the gospel, though they did not see him as Thomas did, nor handle him as he might. This is a sure rule, That by how much our faith stands in less need of the external evidence of sense, the stronger our faith is, and the more acceptable it is, provided what we believe be revealed in the word of God: *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Observe here, 1. The true end for which the miracles of Christ were so carefully recorded; namely, *that we might believe.* By believing that Christ is the Son of God, we have life; and by the evidence of his miracles, we know and believe him to have been the Son of God. The miracles which Christ wrought, were the best external evidence of his mission. Observe, 2. That all Christ's miracles, both before his passion, and after his resurrection, were not recorded by the evangelists. Observe, 3. The great point concerning Christ to be

known and believed from the scriptures, is this, that Jesus, the Son of the virgin, is the promised Messiah, the anointed of the Father, he in whom all the types and shadows of the law are accomplished; and that this Jesus is for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, and for duration co-eternal with the Father; one in essence, equal in power and glory. Thus believing that Jesus is the Son of God, and accompanying that belief with a holy life, if we believe well, and live well, we shall have life through his name.

### CHAP. XXI.

**A**FTER these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias: and on this wise shewed he *himself*.

The foregoing chapter acquainted us with several appearances of Christ to his disciples after his resurrection, all which were in Jerusalem. This chapter acquaints us with his appearing to his disciples in Galilee, whither he had ordered his disciples to go, promising there to meet them. Jerusalem now becomes a forsaken place, a people abandoned to destruction; Christ will not show himself openly to them, but Galilee was a place where Christ's ministry had found better acceptance; to Galilee therefore doth he go. Such places wherein Christ is most welcome to preach, shall be most honoured with his presence: *Jesus showed himself to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias, called elsewhere the sea of Galilee.*

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

Observe here, That after Christ was crucified, the disciples returned for a time to their trade and employment of fishing; though they were called to be fishers of men, yet churches not being gathered and constituted at present, nor being able to maintain them, they labour with their hands to supply their present necessities.

Afterwards, when at the feast of Pentecost they had received those visible gifts of the Holy Ghost, which did furnish them for preaching the gospel to all nations, and they went forth to plant and propagate the gospel, we may believe they then gave over the labour of their secular callings, and applied themselves wholly to the work of the ministry. That may be done (*Ecclesiâ constituendâ*) in a church which is constituting, or about to be constituted. Observe farther, How Peter, with the rest, *toil all night, and catch nothing*; but no sooner is Christ come among them, but they inclose a multitude of fishes.—Thereby teaching us, That all human labours and endeavours are in vain, unless Christ by his presence and blessing crown them with success.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Observe here, 1. Christ was near, very near to his disciples, but they perceived it not: *Jesus stood on the shore, but they knew not that it was Jesus.* Learn, Christ is not always discerned by us when he is present with us; it is a double mercy to enjoy his company, and to know indeed that it is he. Observe, 2. Although they had laboured all the night in vain, yet at Christ's command they go to work again, and with great success: *They were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes.* When Christ is about to do great things for his people, yet will he have them exert all possible endeavours of their own; and the want of former success must not discourage from future endeavours. Observe, 3. What a proof Christ here gives of his divinity and godhead: how were all the fish in the sea at his pleasure, and obedient to his command! he knew where they swam, and brings them from one part of the lake to the other, *where the disciples had toiled all night, and caught nothing.* Christ our Mediator is true God, and as such he had a sovereign power and

providence over all the creatures ; the cattle on a thousand hills, and all the fish swimming in the sea, are obedient to his power, and observant of his commands.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. 8 And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. 9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid there, and bread.

Observe here, 1. The great zeal and forwardness of Peter: hearing that it was Christ, he leaps into the sea to get to him. O how inviting, attractive, and alluring, is a sight of Christ! It will make those that know him break through all difficulties to come unto him. It is not a sea of water, no, nor seas of blood, that can keep a zealous soul at a distance from Christ: *When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat, and cast himself into the sea.* Observe, 2. What a complication of miracles were here: as soon as they came to land they discerned another miracle, viz. a fire of coals, and fish laid on, and bread, all created and produced by Christ out of nothing, at this time, as an evidence of his divine power; for before they could get the fish to shore, they saw fish broiling upon coals, which makes it evident that these were none of the fish which they had caught. Christ, when he pleases, for the benefit and comfort of his people, will work miracle upon miracle, mercy upon mercy, one wonder upon the head of another; for here, after a miracle at sea, they met with another miracle at land: *As soon as they came to land they saw a fire.*

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Observe here, 1. What was Christ's end in commanding his disciples to bring forth the fish which they had now taken: namely, that the sight of their number and bigness, together with the sight of the net remaining unbroken, might confirm them in the belief of its being a real miracle. Christ had fed their bellies before, his business now is to feed their minds with the contemplation of the greatness and reality of the miracle. All Christ's miracles were obvious to sense, and would bear the examination of the senses; not like the lying wonders of the church of Rome, which are commonly wrought in the dark to cozen the vulgar, and are mere cheats and impostures. Observe, 2. That this full draught of fishes, which Peter and the rest of the disciples now had, might probably prefigure that great and wonderful success which he and they were afterwards to have in fishing for men. Here we have an hundred fifty and three great fishes caught at one draught: but *Acts ii.* we find three thousand souls converted by St. Peter at one sermon. O the marvellous success of the gospel at the first preaching and planting of it! Three thousand then proselyted by one sermon. Now we have cause to fear that there are three thousand sermons preached, and scarce one soul savingly converted. *Lord! who hath believed our report?*

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come, and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

A two-fold reason may be assigned why Christ did at this time invite and call his disciples to dine with him: the first and more principal reason was, to evidence to them the reality of his resurrection, and to assure them of the truth of his manhood, that they might not think it was an apparition only. By the miracle in catching the fishes, he proved himself to be God; by his present eating of the fish, he evidenced himself to be man, and consequently teaches us, that our exalted High Priest continues our kinsman in heaven. He is still bone

of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; he has taken possession of heaven in our nature, sitting there in our glorified humanity united to the glorious Deity, clothed with that body which hung in its blood and gore upon the cross, but now shining brighter than ten thousand suns. The second and less principal reason why Christ called his disciples to dine with him, was this, to show his tender care over the bodies of his dear disciples, as being the tabernacles of his own Spirit, the temples of the Holy Ghost; therefore Christ encourages, though not to the pampering, yet to the refreshing of them: *Jesus said unto them, Come and dine.* And he would not confer with them till they had dined; as the next verse shows.

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Observe here, 1. Christ puts Peter upon a threefold profession of his love unto him, answerable to his threefold denial of him: his threefold denial required a threefold confession. True repentance ought, and will be as eminent in the fruit and effects of it, as the saint's fall hath been. A threefold denial of Christ shall be attended with a threefold profession of love unto him. Observe, 2. The solemn question put by our Saviour unto Peter: *Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me more than these?* That is, more than thy occupation and employment, more than thy nets and fishing-boats? If so, leave them, and wholly employ thyself in feeding my sheep and

lambs. Or, more than these? that is, more than the rest of my disciples. Dost thou love me more than thou lovest these? Or, more than they love me? If so, evidence the sincerity of thy love to me by thy care of mine. Thence note, That ministers who are called to take care of Christ's flock, had need of much love to Jesus Christ, and great compassion for souls; by which they will be animated and fortified to go through with the labours and difficulties, as well as to encounter the dangers and sufferings, which do accompany their calling. *Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my flock.* Note farther, That the surest argument and best evidence of a minister's love to Jesus Christ, is his conscientious care to feed, that is, to teach, instruct, and govern, the whole flock of Christ; lambs and sheep, weak and strong: the feeblest in the fold were purchased by the great Shepherd. And if he judged them worth his blood, well may we judge them worth our sweat. Note again, That such as would be faithful in their ministerial charge, ought to look upon their people as committed to them by Christ himself, as loved of him, and committed to their care by him, and for which they must be accountable to him. Christ calls them three times over, his lambs and his sheep, and as often charges Peter to feed them. Observe next, Peter's threefold answer to Christ's question: *Simon, lovest thou me more than these? Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* Where note, 1. The great modesty of Peter in his reply. *Lovest thou me more than these?* says Christ; Peter replies, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* He doth not say, Lord! I love thee above them all, and before them all: here is no boasting now. Once it was said that Peter vaunted, *though all men forsake thee, yet will not I*; but now his fall had taught him humility; he boasts not of his love above others, and makes no comparison with others, but only ranks himself among the true lovers of Christ: *Lord, I love thee.* Note, 2. The evidence that Peter gives of his sincere love to Christ: he dares appeal to Christ himself, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee*; yea, Thou art omniscient, the all-knowing and heart-searching God, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee. O! it is a blessed thing, when we can and dare appeal to God's knowledge; and it is matter of high consolation to know that God knoweth our sincerity and love unto him, and he know-

eth and approveth us as such. *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* Note lastly, From these words, *Lord, thou knowest all things*, an argument of Christ's divinity. He that knows all things, and particularly the hearts of all men, is God, 1 Kings viii. 29. but so doth Christ, if St Peter's testimony here be true; saying, *Lord, thou knowest all things*, that is, say the Socinians, very many things; but this would have destroyed St. Peter's argument at once; for it follows not that Christ knew the sincerity of Peter's heart, unless he knew the secrets of all hearts; and if he knew the secrets of all hearts, he is really God.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 12 Thus spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

In these words our Saviour forewarns Peter of his future sufferings, intimating, that he should prove more stout than in his former trial. When he was young and unexperienced, he enjoyed his liberty; but when he was grown older in years, and stronger in grace, he should willingly stretch forth his hands, and quietly suffer himself to be bound to the cross; for Peter (say some) was not nailed, but tied and bound to the cross only, and so as a martyr or witness for the truth of Christ glorified God by his death. Learn hence, 1. The ministers of Jesus Christ, when they undertake the charge of his flock, must prepare for suffering work, and their lot upon it: therefore is this prediction of Peter's sufferings joined with the former injunction, *Feed my sheep.* 2. That human nature in Christ's ministers, as well as in other men, reluctates sufferings, has an antipathy against a violent death: *They shall carry thee whither thou wouldest not.* 3. From the time of St. Peter's sufferings, when he is old: learn, That the timing of the saints' sufferings is in Christ's hands; he can, and when he pleaseth doth, screen them from suffering till old age; and when

their work is almost done for God, they close their days with suffering for him: *When thou art old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee.* Learn lastly, That the sufferings of the saints in general, and of the ministers of Christ in particular, do redound much to the glory of God; which is a consideration that ought to reconcile them to the cross of Christ, and support them under it: *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, what is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

Our Saviour having foretold the manner of Peter's death in the foregoing verses; here in these, Peter is inquisitive after, and very solicitous for the knowledge of, what kind of death St. John should die. Christ checks him for his curiosity, as meddling with that which did not concern him, yet intimates to him that John should live till he came to take vengeance on the Jews, and destroy Jerusalem: *If I will that he tarry till I come*; that is, till I come to execute judgment upon Jerusalem. Here we may note, There are two great vanities in men with reference to knowledge; the one a neglect to know what is our duty to know; the other a curiosity to know what doth not belong to us to know. Christ tells Peter, it was none of his business to enquire what John should do; but he ought rather to be preparing for what he himself should suffer: *If I will that he tarry, what is that to thee.*

23 Then went his saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

Observe here, How strangely our Saviour's words were mistaken and misunderstood by his own disciples; they appre-

hence presently that John should not die, and so it passed current among them. From hence we may note, How much the wisdom of God is, and ought to be admired, in giving us a written word and tying us to it, when we see erroneous traditions so soon on foot in the world, and our Saviour's own speeches so much mistaken, and that by wise and holy men themselves in the purest times. Much more may the words of others be misreported, and wrested contrary to their sense and meaning. How great then is the vanity and uncertainty of oral tradition! Men are naturally prone to mistake, to mistake themselves, and to mistake one another. The more to be admired is their over-daring ignorance, who think they cannot err. Such a haughty opinion of a man's self, concludes him to be neither good nor wise.

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

The great modesty of the holy evangelist St. John is all along throughout his gospel very observable; he mentioneth himself hitherto under a third person; he calleth himself a disciple, a learner, who excelled the most accomplished doctors of the ages ever since. Here he speaks more plainly and expressly concerning himself, declaring that he was an eye-witness and an ear-witness of what he wrote, for the greater certainty thereof. And this protestation here made by the evangelist of the truth of what he wrote, was highly necessary, lest any should think that Christ's extraordinary love and affection to him, (he being the beloved disciple) should move him to exceed (as we are prone to do) in writing the history of their lives who are dear to us, and we to them. Learn hence, That this gospel was written by John the beloved disciple, and the narration is of divine truth, worthy to be embraced and received by us as a perfect rule of faith and life. *We know that his testimony is true.*

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which

if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

John being about to conclude the history of our Saviour's life asserts, that there were many other miracles and special deeds done by Christ, both before and after his passion, which he had not recorded or set down; because, should all that Christ did and said be committed to writing, it would even fill the world, the volumes would be so many. From hence we gather, 1. The wonderful activity, industry, and diligence, of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was never idle, but that his whole life was spent in doing good; because should all the particular instances have been recorded, it would amount to an incredible bulk. Learn, 2. That it is impossible to get all said, which might be said of Christ, and in his commendation: such is the transcendent excellency of his person, and the weakness of our apprehensions and judgments, that if all were written, which might be written concerning him, the world itself could not contain the books which should be written. Learn lastly, That although many of Christ's sermons, conferences, miracles, and actions, be not recorded; yet it doth not follow, nor can it be inferred from thence, that any necessary doctrine is omitted, or not sufficiently confirmed: there being so much written as it pleased God we should know, and was necessary for us to know, in order to our improvement in faith and holiness. If then, after all the revelation and discovery which God hath made of his Son Christ Jesus, and of the way that leads to eternal salvation by him, persons remain willingly ignorant of him, and of their duty to him, "where shall they appear, and how shall they escape?"

Rev. i. ver. 5, 6.

*Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

## THE CLOSE.

**T**HE design of the foregoing Notes upon the Holy Evangelists, being to recommend the instructive life of our blessed Redeemer to our observation and imitation : although I have upon all occasions propounded his example to be followed by us in all the steps of an imitable virtue, as the matter every where occurred ; yet adjudging it may be profitable to sum up together the several graces and virtues which were so orient in the *Life of Christ*, that having them daily before our eyes, we may be continually correcting and reforming of our lives by that blessed pattern ; I shall therefore briefly offer at it. Because,

Nothing is so proper to form us to holiness, as the example of the Mediator, it being absolutely perfect, and thoroughly accommodated to our present state : there is no example of any mere man that is to be followed without limitation ; but the *Life of Christ* was as the purest gold without the least alloy. His conversation was a living law ; and christianity, which is the best and holiest institution in the world, is nothing else but a conformity to his precepts and pattern. The universal command of the whole gospel is this, *To walk as Christ walked*. This denotes a sincere intention, design, and endeavour, to imitate and follow him in all the paths of holiness and obedience.

*Particularly let us imitate Jesus,*

**I. In his early piety.** We find him at twelve years old about his *Father's business*, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions. See on St. *Luke* ii. 46, 47. An early piety gives both the person and the service a peculiar pre-eminency ; no comfort in life, no happiness in death, like the happiness and comfort of being good betimes.

**II. In his obedience** to his earthly parents. See on St. *Luke* ii. 51. *He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them*. He paid homage to the womb that bare him, and to his supposed and reputed father that provided for him : let a person be never so high above others, he is still

below his parents ; If the highest upon earth think their parents beneath them, and themselves above their parents' commands, our Saviour did not so. What shall we think of those monsters of ingratitude, the reproach of human nature, who are ashamed to own their parents because of their poverty ; or despise them because of the infirmities of their age ! Prov. xxiii. 22 *Hearken to thy Father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.*

**III. In his unwearied diligence** in doing good, Acts x. 38. *Who went about doing good*. This was his meat and drink by day ; his rest and sleep by night. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and administered to such as were in necessities and straits. And he has declared, that he will judge us at the great day, according to our imitation of him in doing good to all mankind. See the notes on St. *Matt.* xxv, the ten last verses.

**IV. In his humility and lowliness of mind**, *Matt.* xi. 29. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart* ; witness his stooping to the meanest office, even that of washing his disciples' feet, St. *John* xiii. 5. He that came in the form of a servant, performs the office of the meanest servant to his disciples. And all this was to set us an example of mutual condescension to each other : *If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet* ; which precept, though it doth not bind us to the same action, yet it obliges us to the same condescension ; namely, to think no office of love beneath us, which the necessities of our brother call for from us.

**V. In the unblameableness and inoffensiveness of his life and actions.** He injured none, and justly offended none, but was harmless as well as holy : he wrought a miracle to pay tribute money, rather than give occasion of offence to the government. See on *Matt.* xvi. 37. Accordingly, let us be harmless and blameless ; wise as ser-



pents, and innocent as doves. Piety without policy is too simple to be safe; policy without piety is too subtle to be good.

VI. *In his eminent self-denial.* He emptied himself and became poor. When he was rich, as God, from all eternity, he impoverished himself by becoming man. O! what did he not deny when he left the bosom of his Father, with the ineffable delights and pleasures which he there enjoyed from all eternity; and instead thereof to drink the cup, the bitter cup of his Father's wrath, for our sake? Lord, how can we enough abase ourselves for thee, who thus deniedst thyself for us?

VII. *In his contentment in a low and mean condition* in this world; yea, in a suffering and afflicted condition. He would not honour the world so far as to have any part of it in his own hand, and was therefore of himself less provided of comfortable accommodations than the birds of the air or the beasts of the field. See Luke ix. 51. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.* Let us learn from him to manage an afflicted condition with a contented spirit; let there be no murmurings, complaints, or foolish charging of God, heard from us, whatever straits or troubles we may be brought into: *But in whatsoever state we are, let us be therewith content,* Phil. iv. 11.

VIII. *In his frequent performance of the duty of private prayer and fasting.* He sometimes spent a whole night in prayer, Luke vi. 12. *He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.* And Mark i. 35. *In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went into a solitary place, and prayed.* It is certain that we have much more business with Almighty God in prayer than Christ had; he had no sins to confess, no wants of grace to make known; yet did he delight with frequency and fervency to perform this homage to his heavenly Father. Lord! How doth thy zeal and forwardness condemn our remissness and lukewarmness in praying to our heavenly Father!

IX. *In his affectionate performance of the duty of praise and thanksgiving.* Our blessed Saviour was a great pattern of thankfulness; Matt. xi. 25. *I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, &c.* John xi. 41. *Father, I thank thee, and thou hast heard me.* When he was to eat common bread, he received it with thanks-

giving. What a pattern of thankfulness then was Jesus to his followers! There is hardly any one external duty which we do not find the hypocrite performing in scripture, except this of thanksgiving and praise! we find Judas repenting, Abab humbling himself, Saul sacrificing; but rarely do we find any wicked man blessing and praising God. Need will make us beggars, but grace only thankgivers.

X. *In his compassion towards those that were in distress and misery,* Matt. xx. 34. Great was his compassion to the bodies of men; he healed all that came unto him; he healed many undesired; with great condolency and tender sympathy, he exercised acts of mercy and compassion, when the object of compassion was before him; and did perfectly abhor, and severely condemn, all acts of cruelty. How great was his compassion to the souls of men! what pains did he take, and what hazards did he run, in preaching the gospel to lost sinners, in his fervent prayers for them, but especially in dying for them! Let us imitate Christ herein. As his compassion was universal to all mankind, to the whole man, soul and body; as it was active and operative; as it was exercised with marvellous complacency and delight; as it was a preventing compassion, and an unwearied compassion; so let ours be also.

XI. *In his holy and fruitful discourse.* His lips dropt as the honey-comb, and his tongue was as choice silver. When walking with his disciples to Emmaus, with what heavenly discourse did he entertain them in the way: See Luke xxiv. 13, &c. A good pattern for our imitation, when providentially cast into such company as will bear it. Lord! what a shame and reproach is it to us, that in common conversation we spend so many hours together, in talking over the news of the city and country, and part without speaking one word of Jesus Christ our best friend!

XII. *In his free conversation.* The Son of man came eating and drinking, Matt. xi. 19. that is, was of a free and familiar converse, affable and sociable, not sour or morose, never shunning the society of the worst of men, even of the Pharisees themselves; but complying with their innocent customs, and accompanying them at their feasts. See on Luke v. 29. We do not find, that when Christ was invited to any public entertainment, that ever he refused to go; not so much for the pleasure of eating as for the opportunity of conversing and

doing good ; Christ conversed with bad men, but as their physician, not as their companion. Let us go and do likewise.

XIII. *In his patience under sufferings and reproaches.* When he was reviled, he reviled not again ; but underwent the burden of his sufferings with admirable patience and meekness of spirit, when his name and honour suffered the vilest indignities, blasphemies, and reproaches, that the malice of Satan, and the malignity of wicked men could belch out against it ; when he was called a blasphemer, a sorcerer, a devil, a wine-bibber, a glutton, a friend of publicans and sinners. For an innocent person, and a dignified person, to bear all this, when he could have looked all his enemies into hell, and have frowned them into nothing ; verily to bear all this, without the least discomposure of spirit, is the highest triumph of patience that ever the world was acquainted with. And why all this, but to leave us an example that we should follow his steps ? 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22.

XIV. *In his readiness to forgive injuries.* One of his last words upon the cross was a prayer for his murderers : *Father, forgive them*, Luke xxiii. 34. He offered up his blood to God on the behalf of them that shed it. Thus to forgive our enemies, and to beg forgiveness of them, will be an evidence of a Christ-like frame and temper ; when the grace of God calms those tumultuous and outrageous passions which at any time we find raging in our breasts, moulding our spirits into sweetness and gentleness, freeing us from all malicious desires of revenge, which are so far beneath a christian, that it is the baseness of a man : yea, as jealousy is the rage of a man, so malice is the rage of a devil ; it is the spirit of the apostate nature.

XV. *In his laying to heart the sins, as well as the sufferings, of others.* Mark iii. 5. *He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts.* Such was his zeal for his Father's glory, such his compassion on the souls of men, such his antipathy against, and hatred of, sin, that he was grieved for sin wherever he found it, and mourned over those who had no hearts to mourn for themselves. Lord ! how far are they off from a Christ-like spirit and temper, who, instead of mourning for other men's sins, rejoice in iniquity, and take pleasure to see their brother stab at once the christian name and his own soul ?

XVI. *In his zeal for the public worship of God.* John ii. 17. *The zeal of thine*

*house hath eaten me up.* Now as Christ was, so christians ought to be, intensely zealous for the glory of God, the honour of his house, and the purity of his public worship. *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* Our zeal for the public worship of God glorifies him most, and he accepts it best. Now we own the God whom we serve, in the face of the world ; and this creates a veneration and esteem of God in the minds of men.

XVII. *In his glorifying of his Father in all he did.* John xvii. 4, *I have glorified thee on earth.* The whole life of Jesus, when here on earth, was a glorifying of his Father : he glorified his Father by the doctrine which he taught, by the miracles which he wrought, by the unspotted purity of his life, and by his unparalleled sufferings at his death. In like manner should we glorify God in all we do, in all we design, in all we desire ; in all our natural actions of eating and drinking ; in our civil employments, buying and selling ; in our lawful recreations, taking care that too much of our time be not consumed therein. Recreation is not to be our business, but to fit us for business ; but especially let us seek to glorify God in our religious duties, public, private, and secret.

XVIII. *In his impartiality in reproving of sin.* He feared the faces and spared the faults of no offenders. The Pharisees were a proud and haughty sort of people, who dishonoured God above most, when they pretended to glorify him above any ; therefore we find Christ denouncing a bad roll of woes against them in one chapter, Matt. xxiii. *Woe unto you, scribes, pharisees, hypocrites !* Eight several woes are denounced against them, for so many several sins committed by them. Those to whom God has given his authority to reprove the sins of others, ought to imitate their pattern in his impartiality in reproving sins. His very enemies gave him that character. Matt. xxiii. 17. *Thou carest not for any man, thou regardest not the person of men :* that is, thou sparest none, but tellest all men of their faults.

XIX. *In his universal obedience to his Father's will, and cheerful submission to his Father's pleasure.* He obeyed the will of his Father universally, voluntarily, sincerely, and with a single eye to his glory, perseveringly, and to the end ; and as he was, so must we be faithful to the death, if ever we expect the crown of life. And in like manner did he submit to the will of his

providence : *Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt : not my will, but thine be done.* O let us keep this example continually before us, and every day obey the will of God's precept universally, and submit to the will of his providence very cheerfully ; this is heaven on earth.

XX. *In his love and practice of universal holiness, both in heart and life.* He was holy in nature, holy in principles and motives, holy in his aim and ends ; he was perfectly holy, precisely holy, uniformly holy, exemplarily holy ; he delighted not in holy persons, and holy things ; it concerns us to imitate him herein, if ever we expect to be where he is. *Heaven is the habitation of holiness :* the company is holy, the employment holy, the enjoyments holy ; no unclean thing can enter into heaven, or could be happy in heaven : heaven is rather a nature than a place. It is not the place of heaven can make us happy, but the disposition and temper of our minds in heaven ; without conformity to the nature of God there can be no communion with him, nor delight in him. What a discourteous courtesy would it be to turn a filthy swine into a garden of curious flowers, to lodge it in a bed of sweet perfumes, to bathe it in a clear and crystal fountain ? Alas, its unclean temper and sordid inclinations would rather choose to lie down in a kennel, and to wallow in the mire, its proper element. Thus unsuitable would heaven be : that place of greatest happiness would be the greatest uneasiness to an unholy heart. Let us then pray and endeavour that the temper of our minds, and the actions of our lives, may be a lively transcript of the mind and life of the holy

Jesus, that we may be like him in purity and holiness, in justice and righteousness, in patience and meekness, in charity and universal goodness. That as he was, we may be in the world, *holy, humble, harmless, heavenly-minded, glorifying God* on earth, that we may be glorified with him and by him in his eternal kingdom.

XXI. Yet before I close this exhortation to an imitation of Jesus, I must subjoin this cautionary direction :—Take heed that you do not so imitate Christ for your pattern, as to disown him for your priest. This is the dangerous error of those who affirm, that the great end of Christ's death was, to give the world an example of patience, humility, meekness, and the forementioned Christian graces ; and that his sufferings were exemplary, but not properly satisfactory. We acknowledge that Christ's giving us an example was one end of his coming into the world and dying for us, but not the great end ; a subordinate end, but not the ultimate. God preserve us from the contagion of this growing error : other errors only scratch the face, but this stabs the heart of the Christian religion, in that it deprives us of the choicest benefit of Christ's death ; namely, the expiation of sin by a proper satisfaction to the justice of God. But, blessed be God, *we have not so learned Christ :* as we are taught, so we believe, that the holy Jesus by the sacrifice of his death has redeemed us from death and hell, and saved us from the wrath to come ; by a full and adequate payment of divine justice, and by the redundancy of his merit, has purchased an eternal inheritance for us ; and as we are taught and believe, so we pray :

“ Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, as also an example of godly life ; give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive this his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life ; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“ Almighty and everlasting God, who of thy tender love towards mankind has sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility ; mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”

### END OF THE FOUR EVANGELISTS.

THE  
ACTS  
OF THE  
HOLY APOSTLES

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The most illustrious life of the holy JESUS being recorded at large in the foregoing Gospels, by the several Evangelists whose names they bear; this next Book of the ACTS undertaketh these three things:

- I. It recommends to our observation and imitation the lives and actions of the holy Apostles, particularly St. Peter and St. Paul; and acquaints us with their fervent zeal and unwearied diligence in planting and propagating Christianity, not only in Judea and Samaria, but also in Syria, Asia, and Macedonia; yea, even in Rome itself: where, by the way, note, That there is not one word, in all this history, of St. Peter's primacy, of his superiority over the rest of the apostles, or of any bishopric that he had at Rome. The least intimation of which would have made a louder noise than Paece Oves, or Tus Petrus.
- II. We have here an ecclesiastical History of the first and purest Churches, informing us how the Christian church in its infancy was planted and watered, gathered and propagated, both among Jews and Gentiles; how she observed and obeyed CHRIST'S commands to his apostles, both in matters of faith, worship, communion, and government, that therein the primitive church might be an exemplary pattern to succeeding churches throughout all ages.
- III. This history gives all the ministers of the gospel, to the end of the world, a great and noble pattern of ministerial diligence, faithfulness, and prudence; acquainting us what the apostles did, the pains which they took, the hazards which they ran, in preaching the glad tidings of salvation to a lost world. How they instructed the ignorant, reduced the wandering; how they bare with the weakness of some, and patiently contended with the obstinacy and perverseness of others. Like wise stewards of GOD'S family, they gave to the whole household their portion of meat in due season.

### CHAP. I.

This first chapter relates, 1. The time and manner of our Lord's ascension. 2. The hundred and twenty disciples' joint devotion. 3. The election of Matthias by lot, to succeed in the apostleship in the room of the apostate Judas.

**T**HE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.

Observe here, 1. The penman of this sacred history, St. Luke, the same that wrote the Gospel, which he calls his *former treatise*, dedicated both that and this to the same Theophilus: *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus.* Observe, 2. The time when St. Luke wrote this holy history, and the place where; namely, when he was the companion of St. Paul; and, as some think, during the time of his imprisonment at Rome. If so, we may profitably remark the favour which God gave the apostle and his companion in the sight of

the keeper of the prison, that they were not denied pen and paper. When persecutors send the saints to prison, God can provide a keeper for their turn. But how do the apostle and his companion spend their time in prison? Very advantageously; the former in writing epistles to the churches for their confirmation; the latter in recording the acts and monuments of the holy apostles for our imitation. There is no such way to be even with the devil and his instruments, for all their malice and spite against us, as by doing all the good we can wherever we come. Satan had better have let these two holy men alone, than have cast them into prison; for by their pens they battered the walls of his kingdom, and made them shake about his ears. Observe, 3. The integrity and impartiality of this historian, St. Luke: he wrote of all *things Jesus both did and taught* in his Gospel, and what the apostles did and taught in the *Acts*: not that this is to be understood

strictly and absolutely, but comparatively only; not as if St. Luke recorded every action that Jesus did, or every expression our Saviour said; for St. John says, they were so many, that they could not be written, chap. xxi. 25. But by all things we are to understand very many things; the most principal and chief things; every thing that the Holy Ghost thought fit to dictate to him and enjoin him to publish for the church's use and service. Learn thence, That St. Luke was a very faithful and impartial historian, withholding nothing which was necessary for the church to know, and leaving no room for unwritten and uncertain traditions: *I have wrote all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.*

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

Observe here, The special concern and care which Christ had for his church on earth, before he ascended into heaven. The very first night that he appeared to his disciples, after his resurrection, he breathed on them, and distributed the holy Ghost among them, St. John xx. 22. both to inform their judgments of what they did not know, and to direct their practice, what he would have them to do: *He, through the Holy Ghost, gave commandments unto the apostles;* that is, he distributed the Holy Ghost amongst them, to be their constant instructor and director, what they should do, in order to the execution of their office and employment. Learn thence, That as the apostles had, so the ministers of Christ, in their measure, shall have, the gracious and special influences of the Holy Spirit to direct and instruct, to quicken and support, them in the faithful discharge of their ministerial office, to the end of the world; that gracious promise, *Lo! I am with you alway*, St. Matt. xxviii. 20. We that live seventeen hundred years after the first making of it, may by faith draw out the comfort of it, as well as the apostles, to whom it was originally made.

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the

things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Observe here, 1. The time which our Lord spent here upon earth, between his resurrection and ascension: it was forty days. Christ would not presently ascend into heaven, as soon as he was risen, but thought fit to stay some time with his disciples, to confirm their faith in the belief of his resurrection, and to satisfy them that it was he himself, their Lord and Master, that died for them, that was indeed risen, and now appeared to them: *He was seen of them forty days.* Observe, 2. What our Saviour did in that forty days' stay upon earth: *He shewed himself alive unto his disciples*, appearing sometimes to them, and giving them many infallible proofs of the verity of his resurrection, by eating, drinking, talking, and conversing with them; by showing his wounds to them, and submitting himself to be touched and handled by them. Not that Christ's conversation with his disciples, in this his exalted state after his resurrection, was so frequent and familiar as it was before his death, when he was in a state of humiliation; and accordingly we never read, I think, that Christ ever lodged or continued all night with his disciples, after he was risen from the grave; but he conversed with them only upon occasion, as he pleased himself, and when he pleased. Observe, 3. What our Saviour said, as well as what he did, in this intervening time betwixt his resurrection and ascension, being forty days. *He spake to his disciples of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* That is, 1. Of the things pertaining to his church militant, or the kingdom of grace here on earth, how he would have his church planted and propagated by the apostles' doctrine, guided and governed by their discipline: or, 2. By the *kingdom of God*, may be understood the church triumphant, or the kingdom of glory in heaven: what perfect bliss and happiness he was now going to prepare for them in the presence of his Father. Where note, That Christ's kingdom is purely spiritual; that Christ's spiritual kingdom is his church; and the preaching of the gospel is the great instrumental means for the erecting of the kingdom of grace, and enlarging of the kingdom of glory.

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from

Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saieth he*, ye have heard of me: 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Note here, How frequently Christ renewed his promise to his disciples, of sending down the Holy Ghost to confer upon them the gifts of tongues and miracles, in order to the fitting and furnishing them for their work of preaching and publishing the gospel to all nations: *Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence*. That is, The gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost shall be largely poured forth upon you, (as water upon the baptized person,) which was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. When Christ calls his ministers to extraordinary assistance, furnishing them with endowments answerable to their great employments. Note, 2. The place where Christ commands the apostles to wait for the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them; namely, at Jerusalem; *He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise*. Of all places, the apostles would least have chosen Jerusalem to tarry in, had not Christ commanded them to wait there. For Jerusalem was now a justly abhorred and detested place, reeking afresh with the blood of the holy and innocent Jesus; yet Jerusalem is the place chosen by Christ for the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. Because, 1. There had been his greatest humiliation: there Christ had suffered the greatest ignominy, therefore there will he show forth his power and glory. 2. Because at Jerusalem there was the greatest company of spectators to behold this noble work, and to be wrought upon by it. Such as would not be convinced by our Saviour's death and resurrection, might probably be convinced by this miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit, descending upon the apostles in fiery cloven tongues. Lord! what an instance was this of thy love to thine enemies! How desirous wert thou of the conversion and salvation of thy very murderers! In and at Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified, the Holy Ghost first descended; and when Christ appointed where the gospel-combination should begin, Jerusalem is the first place in nomination by him. St. Luke xxiv. 47. *And he said unto them, that repentance and remission*

*of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

Observe here, The disciples' question, and our Saviour's answer: 1. The question proposed by the disciples, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* That is, wilt thou repair the ruinous condition of the Jewish state, and restore it to that great dignity and splendour which we have always expected should be done by the Messias? Where observe, That notwithstanding Christ had so often rebuked the Jews in general, and his disciples in particular, for their conceit of a temporal kingdom, (who were so full of ambitious expectations to receive great honours and preferments here on earth,) yet it evidently appears, that this notion still ran in their minds, and that their Master being now risen from the dead, this was the time both for his and their dignity and advancement. Learn hence, That it is no wonder that unbelievers stumbled at the poverty and meanness of Christ's outward condition when he was here on earth, seeing it was so hard for the disciples themselves to be convinced, and believe that his kingdom was not of this world. I know not any thing wherein the bishop of Rome may so properly call himself apostolical, as in his following this error of the apostles. Were they always dreaming of a temporal kingdom? so is he always dotting upon it, and his eyes dazzled with the splendour and glory of it. The disciples not only all the time that Christ was with them, but even now, when upon the point of departing from them, when he was just ascending, yea, in part ascended, having one foot upon the earth, and the other in the cloud which took him to heaven, yet still they asked him, Wilt thou now restore the kingdom? that is, settle upon us thy followers secular power, and temporal dominion here on earth? But mark, 2. Our Lord's answer, ver. 7. *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons,*

*which the Father hath put only in his own power.* Our Saviour's answer doth not in the least imply that any such kingdom should ever be granted, as they dreamt of; but he checks their curiosity in enquiring into the times and seasons, and nature of God's secrets, which it no ways concerned them to pry into: *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons.* Here note, 1. Something implied, namely, that there are certain times and seasons, the knowledge of which only belongs to God, which yet man's curiosity has an itching desire to search and pry into. There is nothing more natural to man, than a desire to know both what shall be hereafter, and when that hereafter shall be. We are very careless in seeking out the season of that which we ourselves should do; but over-careful and curious in seeking out the season of what God will do. Note, Here is something expressed, namely, that God hath times and seasons for executing his own purposes, which it is neither proper, or profitable, nor possible, for us to know. Not proper, because none of our business; not profitable, because no part of our interest; not possible, because out of our reach. It is not possible for us to know either what God is about to do, or when he will do it. It is not possible for us to know it as men by a natural sagacity, nor as christians by a supernatural illumination; no, nor as ministers and apostles, without divine inspiration and extraordinary revelation, which we have no warrant to expect, and should have no curiosity to desire. Learn hence, That it much better becomes us with an awful silence to adore, than with a bold curiosity to pry into God's hidden and unrevealed secrets. Yet though it be not for us to know God's times and seasons, it is our duty to expect them, and be prepared for them. We know not when our Lord will come to us by death and judgment, whether *in the evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning*; but it is our duty to believe and expect it, to wait and prepare for it, and be always ready to receive him. Finally, Though it is not for us to know the times and seasons which God hath put in his own power, yet it is for us to know the times and seasons which God hath put in our power; namely, the present time to improve it, and the time past to bewail our misimprovement of it. To improve the time of affliction, for consideration and humiliation; and the time of prosperity, mercy, and deliverance,

for gratulation and thankfulness; and to improve both in farther measures and increase of holiness and sanctification both of heart and life.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Observe here, How Christ instead of gratifying his disciples' curiosity, acquaints them with their own duty: he tells them that although they had received his Spirit before, in some measure, yet very shortly the Spirit should be poured forth upon them in a plentiful manner, to confer the gift of tongues, prophecies, and miracles, upon them, for rendering them fit to preach the gospel throughout all nations, and also to testify and bear witness unto the truth of what Christ did and said in Judea and Samaria, both to Jews and Gentiles, even to the uttermost parts of the earth. Hence note, What is the special work of the ministers of the gospel; namely, to bear witness unto Christ: *Ye shall be witnesses unto me.* This they do three ways; *Christum prædicando; secundum Christum vivendo; propter Christum patiendo*: "By the purity of their doctrine, by the piety of their lives, and by their patience under suffering, both for Christ, and from Christ." Note, 2. What it was that enabled the apostles thus to bear witness unto Christ, namely, the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon them: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me.* Thence learn, That some measure of ministerial gifts and sanctifying graces from the Holy Spirit, is absolutely necessary to enable the ministers of the gospel to bear their testimony unto Christ with faithfulness and success.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Here an account is given of our Saviour's triumphant ascension into heaven, with several remarkable particulars thereunto belonging. Observe, 1. Who and what it was that ascended: even the same that descended, Christ Jesus in his divine nature as God, and in his human nature as man;

his person consisting of soul and body, he now ascended in both. Observe, 2. The place he ascended from : from this world in general, and from mount Olivet in particular, that very place where he began his last sorrowful tragedy. Where his heart began to be sad, here it is now made glad. Learn hence, That God can make the very places of our trouble and torments, (as sick beds, prisons, strange countries,) to become places of comfort and triumphant joy unto us, when he pleases. Observe, 3. The place whither he ascended : into heaven ; that is, the third heaven, the throne of God, the seat of the blessed. Hence he is said to *ascend far above all heavens* ; that is, above the aerial and starry heavens which we see, into the highest heavens ; unto the place where he was before, as himself expresses it, *John vi. 62.* Thence learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ is returned back again to that sweet and glorious bosom of delight and love, from which he came at his first incarnation : *What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascending up where he was before ?* Observe, 4. The time when our Lord ascended ; forty days after his resurrection. The care and love of Christ to his church was manifested by this his stay with them. Unspeakable glory was prepared for him, and did not await him ; but he would not go to possess it, till he had settled all things for the good of his church. And when he had settled his family in order, and given charge to his disciples concerning the discipline of his house, he would stay no longer, lest he should seem to affect a terrestrial life. Note hence, That Christ desired to be no longer here, than he had work to do for God and souls. A good pattern for our imitation, to desire life upon the score of usefulness ; to be willing to be gone when our work is done. Observe, 5. How and after what manner Christ ascended up into heaven : he ascended, as well as was raised from the grave, by his own power, *ver. 10. Whilst they looked stedfastly, he went up ;* that is, by his own divine power. True, the angels did attend him, but they did not assist him. Elias went to heaven in a chariot of fire, but he was fetched up, he could not carry himself up ; but Christ needed no chariot, no carriage of angels for his conveyance, being the author of life and motion. 2. He ascended magnificently, with great triumph, into his kingdom in heaven ; *God went up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.* A cloud is prepared as a royal chariot, to carry up this

King of glory to his royal pavilion : *A cloud received him out of their sight.* And, O ! what jubilations of the blessed angels were heard in heaven ! The triumphs and universal acclamations are not ended to this day, nor ever shall end. 3. He ascended munificently, shedding forth innumerable and inestimable gifts upon his church at his ascension : *When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts to men ; prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.* And, O ! how many thousands now in heaven, and upon earth also, are blessing Christ, at this day, for these his ascension-gifts ! Observe, 6. The witnesses of our Lord's ascension : Elias had but one witness of his rapture into heaven, St. Paul not one ; but Christ will neither have all eye-witnesses of his ascension, not yet too few ; he did not carry all Jerusalem forth to see his glorious departure, but the select company of his disciples only ; the number of witnesses was about an hundred and twenty. Those who had been partners with him in his humiliation, are now made witnesses of his glorious ascension. If we will converse with Christ in his lowly estate here on earth, we shall be made happy with the sight of his transcendent glory ere long above. Observe, 7. The cause and reasons why he thus ascended ; namely, because, had he not ascended, he could not have been inaugurated and installed in the glory he now enjoys above. Had he not ascended, he could not have interceded, as now he doth, for us here below. Had he not ascended into heaven, we could never have entered heaven : he entered as our fore-runner, as our head and representative, and we ascend after him in the virtue of his ascension before us. In a word, had he not ascended before us, the Holy Spirit had not been enjoyed by us, as a sanctifier, and as a comforter, at least not in that measure in which he has since been enjoyed by his church : *If Christ had not gone, the Comforter had not come.* He begins where Christ ended. Take we good heed then, how we treat the holy Spirit whom Christ sent down from heaven at his ascension thither ; that we do not grieve him by our unkindness, nor vex him by our disobedience, nor quench him by our sinful neglects of duty ; for in grieving the Spirit, we grieve our Comforter, and in grieving our comforter, we grieve ourselves. But let us entertain him kindly, on account of his nature ; for he is God, *Acts. v.* On



the account of his office, and the benefits we receive by him; for he is *Vinculum Unionis*, the bond of Union between Christ and our souls, without which we can never have either interest in Christ or communion with him.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Observe here, How the spectators of our Lord's ascension were justly transported into an ecstasy of wonder and admiration. Christ ascended gradually and leisurely, that he might at once confirm the faith, and delight the eyes and minds, of his beholders. Whilst they thus stood admiring, two angels in the shape of men appear in white, (a colour which they oft appeared in, to show both that they retained their native purity, and also to represent the joyfulness of their errand which they went upon,) and call to the apostles, who were some of them men of Galilee, to take notice that this Jesus whom they now beheld ascending up into heaven, should come again to judge the world, and so come again *in like manner*; that is, visible, in a cloud, by his own power, with the like majesty, and with the same soul and body. But not one word of the time when; that not knowing the hour, we may be upon the watch every hour: *Idco latet unus Dies ut observentur omnes.*

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and sup-

plication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

The apostles having seen our Saviour thus gloriously ascend into heaven from mount Olivet, they return to Jerusalem, which is called a sabbath-day's journey, that is, about two miles. Eight furlongs make a mile, and Bethany, in which was the mount of Olivet, was from Jerusalem about fifteen furlongs, *John xi. 18.* This was the common walk which the Jews used on the sabbath-day, but rather for meditation than recreation's sake. The apostles thus returned, assemble together at Jerusalem, where they lay the foundation of the first gospel church. And here observe, 1. How the names of all the eleven apostles are repeated, and distinctly set down: to show that although they had fallen from their profession, and forsaken Christ, yet they had recovered themselves by repentance, and were risen again; and upon their recovery were continued by Christ in their former office and dignity. O the mighty power of a sincere repentance, to reinstate us in the favour and friendship of an offended God. Observe, 2. How the sight of Christ's ascension had established and confirmed the apostles' faith: they now adore and worship him, and assemble together to perform their joint devotions to him. Before Christ's resurrection and ascension, we scarce read of any act of adoration that the disciples paid unto him. True, they looked upon him as a person sent from God, a great prophet, and the son of David. But his deity being evinced, and now made evident to them by his resurrection from the grave and ascension into heaven, they now worship him as the Son of God. See *Luke xxiv. 52.* Observe, 3. The place were this christian congregation did assemble: *In an upper room.* That is, says Dr. Hammond, in one of the chambers belonging to the temple; in the large upper room, say others, where Christ had lately eaten the passover with his disciples: it was, no doubt, the most convenient place they could find for that solemnity; an upper room being remote from noise and company, and capacious enough to receive this primo-primitive church, consisting of an hundred and twenty persons. It teaches us, that all advantages, with respect to time and place, and other circumstances, for the better performance of holy duties, ought to be made

use of and improved by us. Observe, 4. The persons who were the first constituting members of this new constituted church : together with the apostles, mention is made of women in general, and of the Virgin Mary in particular ; where we may remark, That this is the first and last time that the scripture makes mention of her after Christ's death. None of the evangelists record one word of our Lord's appearing once to her, during his forty days stay and continuance upon earth after his resurrection. Doubtless, The Spirit of God in the holy scriptures, by speaking so sparingly of her life, and nothing at all of her death, took care that all those fabulous reports of her assumption, which have since arisen, should find no footsteps in the word of God. God dealeth with her as with Moses, of whose sepulchre no man knoweth unto this day, lest it should be abused to idolatry. The learned Dr. Lightfoot is of opinion, that she continued under the care of the beloved disciple, unto whom Christ committed her, for some time, and at last was taken away by martyrdom, according to Simeon's prophecy, Luke ii. 25. *A sword shall pass through thine own soul also.* Which prophecy, he thinks, pointed at the manner of her death. But notwithstanding the silence of the scriptures, the church of Rome confidently affirms, that the Virgin lived sixty-three years, and that all the apostles were at her funeral, except St. Thomas, who desiring afterwards to see her holy corpse, the sepulchre being opened the third day, the body was gone, being assumed and taken up into heaven.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of his disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty,) 16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity ; and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem ;

insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, The field of blood. 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein : His bishopric let another take.

During the ten days' stay and continuance of the apostles at Jerusalem, before the feast of Pentecost, a motion was made amongst them for filling up the vacancy in the sacred college of the apostles, which was occasioned by the death of the traitor Judas ; and here we have observable, 1. The person that made this motion, St. Peter : *In those days Peter stood up, and said.* Whence the church of Rome would infer his supremacy ; but very groundlessly. For St. Peter's being the chief speaker, and sometimes the sole speaker, is not to be attributed to his superiority ; but, 1. To his seniority, he being probably elder than the rest. 2. To his apostolical office : he was appointed to be the first and chief minister of the circumcision, to preach among the Jews ; and therefore no wonder that Peter is first mentioned, when any thing relating to the Jewish affairs is recited. 3. His forwardness to speak and act for Christ and his interest, may be imputed to his repentance, it being but necessary that he, who had so scandalously fallen, should by his future zeal convince the world both of his repentance and recovery. And accordingly he speaks, acts, and labours more abundantly than all the apostles : not that the rest were idle or insignificant ; for they were equal with him, having an equal authority, an equal gift of miracles, an equal number of tongues, an equal power to preach the gospel, an equal wisdom in preaching of it ! For the reasons above mentioned, St. Peter spake and did so much ; having dishonoured Christ before by his cowardly denial of him, he now resolves to signalize himself by showing extraordinary measures of zeal and activity for him.—Observe, 2. The honourable office and station which Judas once had : *He was numbered with the apostles, and obtained part of that ministry with them.* Judas, though (secretly) a thief, a traitor, yea, a devil, yet had he by Christ's own choice a part or office in the apostolic order. O Lord ! how possible, and yet how sad, is it to preach to others, and to become castaways ourselves ! to prophesy in thy name, and yet to perish in thy wrath ! to

cast devils out of others, and yet to be cast the devils ourselves ! to have our ministry blessed to others' comfort and salvation, and at the same time to minister to our own condemnation ! *Quis talia fando temperet a lachrymis ?* Observe, 3. Judas's sin described ; *He was guide to them that took Jesus*, ver. 16. A guide to the chief priests in their counsels, as to the manner of apprehending Christ ; and a guide to the soldiers, as to the time and place of his apprehension. Note thence, That there cannot be a greater sin, than for a person to be a guide and leader of others into sin. Woe to magistrates ! woe to ministers ! woe to parents ! that are found guilty of this sin. Observe, 4. Judas's punishment declared : 1. *He was hanged or strangled* ; some think by his own hand, others by the devil's. No doubt that Satan who had so great a hand in his sin, had more than a finger in his punishment. Of all mortals, no wretch ever deserved so direful a fate as this traitor Judas : and doubtless it was the dreadfulest that the devil could inflict. 2. It is added that *he burst asunder, and his bowels gushed out*. The rope, or that to which it was fastened, breaking, he fell down headlong, and burst asunder, and his bowels gushed out. A just and suitable punishment for his want of bowels to his kind and innocent Master. 3. *He went to his own place* ; that is, he went and was sent to bell and damnation, the proper place for the son of perdition ; called his own place, because of his own choosing, of his own deserving, of his own procuring ; it was what he had purchased to himself by the wages of iniquity, and justly deserved for his final penitency.

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25 That he may

take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their lots : and the lot fell upon Matthias ; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Judas having in the forementioned manner made void his office, and being gone to his own place, St. Peter moves the company, that another person may be chosen to fill up the place. Where note, 1. The electors, or persons choosing ; namely, the hundred and twenty : these were the eleven apostles, the seventy disciples, and about thirty-eight more, all of Christ's own kindred, country, or converse ; not that these were all the believers that were found in Jerusalem, for *he appeared to five hundred brethren at once*. But these followed him continually, were of his family and society, and of his immediate train and retinue, and appointed by him for the ministry : these therefore make the choice ; and of one among themselves is the choice made. Note, 2. The qualification of the person which St. Peter directs the company to observe in the choice they make of this new apostle : *One that had companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them*. That is, one that had followed Christ from his baptism to his ascension, to the intent he might be an authentic witness, both of the doctrine and miracles, but particularly of the resurrection, of the Lord Jesus : for the article of the resurrection includes many other articles of faith in it ; for if he arose from the grave, he was buried ; if he was buried, he died ; if he died, he was born. Therefore the person whom they choose, was to be one that had companied with them. Note, 3. That the apostles did not presume to ordain an apostle by imposition of hands ; but the other apostles being chosen of God immediately, it was necessary that he who was to act in the same office should be chosen after the same manner. Accordingly they cast lots, and leave the determination to God ; who devolving it upon Matthias, he was thereupon numbered with the eleven apostles. Lots were used among the Jews for dividing inheritances, for determining elections, &c. and how casual soever it seemed, God was the undoubted determiner of it. Therefore to cast lots upon trivial occasions, and solemnly

to appeal to God's determination in ludicrous matters, is profanely to take the name of God in vain.

### CHAP. II.

The second chapter gives us an account of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles at the feast of Pentecost. This was matter of wonder and amazement to some, but of scorn and mocking derision unto others. Hereupon St. Peter stands up, and in a most excellent sermon defends the apostles, convicts the Jews of crucifying the Lord of life, and exhorts them to believe on him whom they had ignominiously put to death; and the Holy Spirit crowned his endeavours with a desirable success.

**A**ND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

In this extraordinary and miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, observe, 1. The time when, *When the day of Pentecost was fully come*; that is, fifty days after Christ's resurrection. The day of Pentecost is probably believed to have fallen then upon the Lord's day; it is certain from *Acts* i. that the Spirit descended when the apostles were unanimously assembled for his worship, and continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. There is no way to obtain the Holy Spirit from heaven, both as a sanctifier and as a comforter, like fervent prayer, assiduity and peneverance in our devotions, especially in the public assemblies of the saints. Observe, 2. The place where: at Jerusalem, the more general place, where our Lord had undergone his ignominy and reproach, there he manifests forth his glory and dignity: First, by his triumphant ascension, and afterwards by his miraculous mission of the Holy Spirit. The more particular place was the upper room, where they were assembled and constantly prayed. This upper chamber was most raised towards heaven, most remote from noise and company, and worldly distractions. The Spirit of God descends upon, and rests with,

such as have raised affections above the world, and are nearest unto heaven; not upon such as are buried alive in worldly business. Earth will extinguish fire as well as water, and some say sooner; not only sensual lust, but an excess of earthly business and worldly drudgery, will quench the Holy Spirit, and cause him to depart and go away aggrieved from us. Observe, 3. The persons on whom the Holy Ghost thus descended; namely, the apostles; not that they were without the Holy Spirit until now, they had him before in his sanctifying graces; here they receive him in his extraordinary gifts, to fit them for extraordinary services. When God extraordinarily calls any of his servants to more than ordinary service, they may expect more than ordinary assistance. The Holy Spirit now descended upon the apostles in his miraculous gifts, and if we be not wanting to ourselves, he will descend upon us in invisible favours every day, making our souls and bodies a temple and fit habitation for himself to dwell in, by his sanctifying impressions, by his powerful assistances, by his quickening influences; pouring in both the oil of grace, and also the oil of joy and gladness, into our hearts. Observe, 4. The manner how the Holy Ghost at this time descended on the apostles: 1. Suddenly, like the wind; *a rushing mighty wind from heaven*; insinuating, that it was not the apostles' prayer that brought, but Christ's promise and power that sent, the Holy Ghost thus miraculously down upon them. This rushing wind did also represent the mighty efficacy of the Holy Spirit now descending. 2. In the appearance of fiery cloven tongues; cloven, to signify the variety of languages which the apostles should be enabled to speak, and to qualify them to preach the gospel unto all nations; and fiery, to represent that fervent heat and zeal they should be endued with themselves; that divine light they should impart to others, as also that purity and holiness which they and all succeeding ministers of the gospel ought to appear beautified and adorned with. Finally, As fire dissipateth and disperseth, multiplieth and increaseth; even so the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, the more they are diffused and well employed, the more will they be increased; by imparting to our people, we shall gather to ourselves, Thus was our Lord's promise fulfilled to his apostles, in sending down the Holy Ghost upon them, but not upon them only; the

private christian, no doubt, as well as the public apostle, did receive the Holy Spirit according to his measure : to enlighten, as a spirit of knowledge ; to enliven, as a spirit of life ; to warm and heat, as a spirit of zeal ; to mollify and soften, as a spirit of holy fear ; to quicken and strengthen, as a spirit of power ; to guide and direct, as a spirit of wisdom and counsel ; to unite and knit their hearts together, as a spirit of love. And blessed be God for the promise of the same Holy Spirit to abide with all believers, though not in his miraculous gifts, yet in his sanctifying operations and saving graces, to the end of the world.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans ? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born ? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and in the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this ? 13 Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.

The fame of the foregoing miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit being instantly spread abroad in Jerusalem, and there being present at that time great multitudes of Jews, who had come from all parts of Judea, to the feast of Pentecost, and also many other Jews and proselytes born in other nations, in Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, who were now come up to worship the true God at Jerusalem ; when they heard the apostles speak in their own

language, which they never understood before, the wonderful works of God, in the death, resurrection, and ascension, of the Lord Jesus Christ ; some of them wondered to hear illiterate men speaking all languages ; others derided the miracle, and imputed it to drunkenness. Here note, 1. The wisdom and providence of Almighty God, in so ordering the first publication of the gospel, that the fame thereof, and of that convincing miracle which gave authority thereunto, might be carried unto all nations by so many eye and ear-witnesses, as were worshipping at Jerusalem at this time : for *there were now sojourning at Jerusalem men out of every nation under heaven* ; that is, of every nation where any Jews were scattered at this time throughout the world, there were some particular persons come up now to Jerusalem to worship God. Note, 2. The commendatory character given of those persons, who from their several countries came up to the house of God in Jerusalem, to worship him there : they are styled *devout men* ; and they received from God the reward of their piety and devotion. Had they staid at home, as many of their brethren no doubt did, they had not been witnesses of so wonderful a miracle for the confirmation of their faith as now they were. Yet note, 3. The different influence and effect which this miracle of the Holy Spirit's descent in fiery cloven tongues, had upon the minds of the people in Jerusalem. Some were struck in an ecstasy of admiration and awful wonder ; others (the Scribes and Pharisees probably) scornfully deride, and impute the miracle to drunkenness, saying, *These men are full of new wine*. A senseless slander ; for though excess of wine may give a man more tongue, yet not more tongues. O ! how have the holy operations of the blessed Spirit from the beginning been alandered and blasphemed ! accounted the effects of drunkenness then, of enthusiasm or melancholy now !

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words : 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ; 17

And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams : 18 And on my servants, and on my handmaidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit ; and they shall prophesy : . 19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath ; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke : 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come : 21 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Observe here, The holy courage of St. Peter, in defending the innocency of the apostles, and confuting the calumny of drunkenness, which was now cast upon himself and them : *These men are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.* Where note, 1. How he argues negatively from the time of the day : it was but the third hour of the day, that is, nine o'clock in the morning, which was the hour for the morning sacrifice and prayer ; and the worshippers of God (at the great feast especially) were never wont to eat or drink before those holy services were performed. In those times they went to their public devotions fasting ; they served God before they served their bellies. The first fruits of the day were offered in the temple then ; in the tavern now : ten morning and evening visits are made by some to the latter, for one to the former. Note farther, How he argues positively : he assures them, that the apostles were full of the Holy Ghost, and not full of wine ; filled with the Spirit of God ; and that what was now done, was the completion of a prophecy uttered by Joel : *That in the last days,* that is, in the days of the Messias, there should be a most plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit *upon all flesh* : that is, upon Jews and Gentiles, and upon all sorts of persons without distinction, old and young, sons and daughters, bond and free. Learn thence, That the Spirit of God is a free spirit, not confined to any party, to any order or degrees of

men, but plentifully and abundantly poured forth under the gospel dispensation upon all believers. It is one of the great cheats which the pope has imposed upon the world, to persuade them to believe the Spirit of God is tied to the pommel of his chair ; that he, and his cardinals, have monopolized the Holy Ghost. But, blessed be God, he has promised to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, even upon servants and handmaids, to show, that he doth not despise persons of the lowest rank and condition in this world, but that the promise of the Spirit is made unto them also. Observe lastly, What is here foretold that should come to pass after this great effusion of the Holy Spirit, namely, *Wonder in the heaven, and signs in the earth, the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.* Which expressions signify the great miseries and troubles, the calamities and desolations, which should befall the Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem, for their crucifying the Lord of life and glory ; unto which is subjoined the only way to escape and avoid them, namely, calling upon the Lord in fervent prayer and supplication : *Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Intimating, that prayer makes us shot-free, and is a sure defence in all storms, that no evil shall fatally touch our persons, or come near our dwellings, whilst we take hold of God by faith, and approach unto him by prayer. Lord ! how happy is it when strong afflictions from thee, raise strong affections in us towards thee !

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you : by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know : 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain : 24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death ; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

St. Peter having wiped off the unjust aspersion of drunkenness cast upon himself and his brethren in the foregoing verses ; in these he makes it his business to con-

vince the Jews that they were the murderers of the best man that ever lived in the world, even Jesus of Nazareth, the true and promised Messiah. In order to this he treats in this sermon, 1. Of the person and life of Christ. 2. Of the sufferings and death of Christ. 3. Of the resurrection of him from the grave. First, as touching his person, the apostle shows, That he was evidently sent from God and approved of him, by those many miracles, wonders, and signs, which were wrought by him. Hence note, That the many and great miracles wrought by Christ, evidently prove that he was sent of God, and came from him, and was approved by him. Our Saviour's miracles, for the nature of them, were beneficial to mankind; for the number of them, they were many; for the manner of their operation, they were public and open, in the sight and view of all the people; not in corners, like the Popish miracles, (wrought before their own creatures only,) but before his enemies; and for the quality of them, they were of the greatest magnitude, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, giving sight to them that were born blind; by a word spoken, by a touch given: so that our blessed Saviour had all that attestation that miracles can give, that he was commissioned by God, and came from God. The second part of Peter's sermon here treats of the sufferings and death of Christ: *By wicked hands ye have crucified and slain him, who was delivered by the determinate counsel of God.* Where note, 1. The name and kind of death which Christ died: this is described more generally; it was a violent death, *Ye have slain him*; more particularly, it was an ignominious, cursed, and dishonourable death, *ye have crucified him*. Learn thence, that the Lord Jesus Christ was not only put to death, but to the worst of deaths, even the death of the cross. Now the death of the cross was a violent death, a painful death, a shameful death, a lingering death, a succourless death, and an accursed death. Note, 2. The causes of Christ's death are here expressed. The principal cause, permitting and ordering, was the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The instrumental cause, effecting, was the wicked hands of the Jews: *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel. &c. ye have taken, and by wicked hands crucified, &c.* Learn hence, That there was not any one particular action or single circumstance

relating to the death of Christ, but what came under the holy counsel and wise determination of God. Yet this foreknowledge and counsel of God, as it did not necessitate and enforce them to it, so neither doth it excuse them in it. God's foreknowledge and determinate counsel did no more compel or force their wicked hands to do what they did, than the mariner's hoisting up his sails to take the wind to serve his design, can be said to compel the wind to blow. God's end in acting was one, their end in acting was another; his most pure and holy, theirs most malicious and daringly wicked. In respect of God, Christ's death was justice and mercy; in respect of man, it was murder and cruelty; in respect to himself, it was obedience and humility. The third part of the apostle's sermon, respects the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the grave, *Ver. 25. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* Christ, though laid, was not lost in the grave; but revived and rose again, and rose by the power of his Godhead. True, God is here said to raise him, and the Spirit elsewhere; but we are not to understand it so, as if they raised him by their power without his own power; for he declares it expressly, *John ii. In three days I will raise up the temple of my body.* And if he had not raised himself by his own power, how could he be said, *Rom. i. 4. To be declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead?* What more had appeared in Christ's resurrection than in any other, if that were all? For others were raised by the power of God as well as he. Now because the Jews, to whom Peter here preaches, were filled with prejudice against Christ, the apostle thought fit to tell them that God had raised him from the dead; yet by consequence it sufficiently appears in the following discourse, that Christ raised himself from the dead.—Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, by the omnipotent power of the Godhead, the Father's, the Spirit's, and his own Godhead, revived, and rose again from the dead, to the terror and consternation of his enemies, and the unspeakable consolation of all believers. As by the eternal Spirit, or the power of his own Godhead, he offered up himself to God when he died; so when he was put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit; that is, by the power of his divine

nature. The same Spirit enabled him to do both. Observe also, The reason annexed, why God raised up Jesus Christ : because *it was impossible* that death should hold him. But how impossible? 1. *Twas naturally impossible*, upon the account of that divine power which was inherent in his person as God. 2. *Twas legally impossible*, because divine justice being fully satisfied by his sufferings, required that he should be raised to life; as when a debt is paid, the prisoner is discharged, and the prison-door opened.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved : 26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope : 27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy one to see corruption. 28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life ; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; 21 He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens : but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

St. Peter here proceeds in this memorable

sermon, which he preached at the feast of Pentecost, to convince the Jews, that Jesus, whom they had crucified, was undoubtedly the promised Messiah, because he was raised from the grave according to the prophetic prediction, Psal. xvi. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* And accordingly St. Peter doth strongly prove that these words, in their literal sense, could not be spoken of David, because he was left in the grave, and saw corruption ; but must be applied unto Christ, who though he was laid, yet was not lost in the grave, but saw no corruption, being raised by God the third day. Hence note, That though death bound the hands and feet of Jesus Christ, and laid him in his grave, yet, Samson-like, he snapt and broke those bands asunder, it being impossible that he should be holden of them, or confined by them. It was impossible for Christ to continue death's prisoner in the grave longer than three days : 1. Because he was Lord of life and death, he was the resurrection and the life ; life to quicken himself, and the resurrection to raise us ; he was the resurrection effectively, the life essentially and formally. Now it was impossible for death to hold him that was life itself under its power, any longer than he who is life pleased ; and for this reason he is said to swallow up death in victory, 1 Cor. xv. 54. 2. Because of his undertaking for us ; for if Christ had been held by corporal death, we must have continued for ever under the power of spiritual death ; therefore the Holy one was not suffered to see corruption, the least corruption, according to the prophetic prediction, Psal. xvi. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; that is, my dead body in the grave, (for David was left in that hell, from which Christ was raised, but the hell which David was in was not beyond the grave ; ) nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption ; that is, I shall neither see, nor feel, nor lie under the power of corruption, but shall suddenly rise again, and then my Father will show me the path of life, and make me full of joy with his countenance ; that is, after my resurrection, I shall live for ever in glory in the presence of my Father, where I shall have fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore.*

The last part of St. Peter's sermon treats of Christ's ascension. Ver. 33, *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, &c.* intimating, That when the Lord Jesus Christ had finished his work upon earth, he



was placed in the seat of the highest honour and authority, at the right hand of God in heaven. To convince the Jews of the certainty hereof, St. Peter applies that promise, *Psal. cx. 1. unto Christ, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool*; showing that these words are not applicable unto David; for David is not ascended into heaven in his own person, but his body remained in the sepulchre then amongst them; but Christ was ascended, and at the right hand of God exalted, and, pursuant to his promise, had now sent down the Holy Ghost in fiery cloven tongues, and divers languages, upon them. Where note, The great and wonderful change in the state and condition of Christ, since his ascension into heaven: a little while since they called him the *carpenter's son, this fellow, this deceiver*; now he has obtained a more excellent name than angels. Then he had not a place to lay his head on; now he is exalted to be *heir of all things*. Here he sweats, there he sits; here he groaned, there he triumphs; never to groan, weep, or bleed more. His human nature is now advanced to the highest honours, even to the object of adoration both to angels and men. This was the doctrinal part of St. Peter's sermon: it treated of the person, life, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension, of the Lord Jesus, in a very close and convincing manner. His warm application of the whole now follows, ver. 36.

**36** Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

That is, God the Father hath ordained and appointed this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, to be the Head and Saviour of his church, he being the true and promised Messiah. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ was constituted and appointed by his Father, to be the supreme Governor and only Saviour of his church. God had made Jesus *both Lord and Christ*, both a Prince and a Saviour. Note farther, How very close and home the apostle is in applying what he had said to his auditors; he doth not rest in generals; but says plainly, Ye are the men. This is the *same Jesus* whom ye have crucified, whom ye with wicked hands have slain. Had not the application

been so close, it is probable the success of the sermon had not been so considerable. Thence learn, That the success and efficacy of the word preached, depends upon a particular and warm application of it to every man's conscience: generals will not affect. See an instance of it in what follows.

**37** Now, when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Here the success of St. Peter's sermon is recorded: the auditors were not only affected, but their hearts were touched with a kindly remorse; they mourn for sin, and enquire what they should do to be saved? Some in our days would have been offended at such an enquiry, and told them, It was not doing, but believing only, that God expected; that Christ had *done* all for them, and that they had nothing *to do*, but to believe strongly that all was done to their hands: but St. Peter reproves them not for their enquiry, but puts them upon doing; namely, the exercise and practice of repentance, in the next verse. Here note, 1. That conversion, where it is in truth, begets and occasions a very great and sensible change. 2. That the preaching of the word is the instrumental means for the effecting and accomplishing of this change. 3. That the best preaching is that which pricks men's hearts, wounds and convinces their consciences, and makes them thoroughly sensible both of their sin and danger, and of the great necessity of a change. 4. That when men are once convinced of their bad state and dangerous condition, their first enquiry will be, yea, should and ought to be, What they should do to be saved? They said, *Men, and brethren, what shall we do?* The apostle liked that enquiry very well; and answers it in the next verse.

**38.** Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. **39.** For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. **40.** And

with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Observe, 1. St. Peter exhorts them to repentance, But did they not repent already? Were they not now pricked at their hearts? And will the apostle add grief to grief, and pain to smart! Know, that the apostle advises them to join to their legal sorrow, evangelical repentance, such as is attended and accompanied with owning Christ to be the true Messias, with believing in him, with desire and hope of pardon from him. Where by the way, observe, That St. Peter prescribes a dose of the same physic for them, which he had very lately taken himself with good success, when upon his hearty sorrow he obtained pardon for denying his Lord and Master, Matt. xxvi. 75. *He went out and wept bitterly.* No sermons are so sovereign and so successful as those which proceed from the minister's personal and comfortable experience. St. Peter presses upon his auditors the doctrine of repentance, which he himself had practised. Observe, 2. Upon their repentance, their owning of, and believing in Christ, he directs them to be baptized in his name, and then they should be capable of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; even of those miraculous gifts which they now saw and admired in the apostles. Learn hence, That baptism is a solemn ordinance and sacred institution of Jesus Christ, which is not to be administered to any out of the christian church, till they profess repentance and faith in Christ, and sincere obedience to him; *Repent and be baptized every one of you.* Observe, 3. The argument which the apostle uses with them by way of encouragement to persuade them to repent and be baptized; for says he, *The promise is unto you and to your children;* to you, Jews of the seed of Abraham, and to your seed; and to as many of the Gentiles, and their seed, as shall be called by the preaching of the gospel to profess faith in Christ, and subjection to him. Where, by the *promise*, is meant the gracious covenant of God, whereby he offers pardon and peace to such as will accept them. Now this acceptance is twofold: 1. Cordial; which entitles a person to all the benefits of the covenant, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. And, 2. Professional only; which entitles a person and his seed to church pri-

ileges only. Hence learn, That when God takes believing parents into covenant with himself, he takes also their children or seed into covenant with himself likewise. And if so, then the seal of the covenant, which is baptism, ought to be applied to them. It is evident that under the Old Testament, children were in covenant with God, as well as their parents. And do we any where find that ever they were cast out under the gospel? The apostle doth not say the promise *was* unto you and your seed; but, *still is;* for otherwise children would be in a worse condition under the gospel of Christ, than they were under the law of Moses; but surely the privileges of the gospel are not straiter and narrower than those of the law. Observe, lastly, How St. Peter closes all with an exhortation to his auditors, *to save themselves from that untoward generation;* that is, from the Scribes and Pharisees, that sour sort of men, who desperately and maliciously opposed Christ and his gospel, and by their authority and example kept people from embracing the only way of salvation revealed by Jesus Christ.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

Observe here, 1. The wonderful success of St. Peter's sermon: about three thousand were converted to the profession of the christian religion in one day, by hearing a single sermon. How many thousands of sermons have been since preached without the conversion of a single person? Oh, what an high holiday was this memorable day in heaven! This *All Saints day* was a festival of great solemnity there, where there is joy over one sinner that repenteth. But here did concur several advantages to render St. Peter's sermon more effectual: 1. The sufferings of our Saviour were so near in place, and so late in time, that his wounds were still fresh bleeding in the guilty memories of the people now assembled. 2. The present miracles of tongues bestowed on St. Peter, and his unlearned companions, did wonderfully make way for the word delivered. And, 3. His auditors were devout men, ver. 5. ignorant enough, but yet brought with them minds fairly disposed for information and conviction. 4. The Holy Spirit wrought now

extraordinarily by and with the word, and caused this miraculous improvement. Now did our Saviour fulfil his promise to his disciples: John xiv. 12, *Greater works than these shall ye do, when I go to my Father.* Now was Peter the disciple above his Master in success: Christ all his life time was angling for a few fishes, whilst St. Peter comes with his drag-net, and catches three thousand at one cast. Observe, 2. These three thousand were baptized the same day in which they were converted, and probably in the same place, which was at Jerusalem; either in the temple, or in some house, where the sermon was preached. We need not enquire, whether the apostles did it by dipping or sprinkling, both being lawful; but this may be said, It is hard to guess how such a quantity of water could be brought to the place, as might serve for the decent dipping of three thousand persons in so short a time. And, upon supposition that the water was not brought to them, but they went down to that; baptizing so many by dipping, would have required a week rather than a day to despatch it in.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Which words give us an account of the behaviour of the first christians, particularly in their religious assemblies, and of the way of worship used in the church of Jerusalem, the true mother church, in the time of the apostles. Where observe, 1. The doctrine which they adhered to, the doctrine of the apostles; that is, the doctrine delivered by Christ, and taught by the apostles, and contained in the Holy scriptures. This was the rule which the first christians governed themselves by, both as to faith and manners. It was infinite wisdom in God to inspire holy men for committing this doctrine to writing, and not to leave it to the hazardous and uncertain way of tradition. Observe, 2. The steady adherence of the first christians to this doctrine of the apostle: *They continued stedfastly in it*; that is, they were constant hearers of it, and attendants upon it; they received it not upon trust, but due examination. Learn hence, That religion being the great interest and common concern of mankind; he that espouses it aright, must first understand and examine the fundamental

grounds and principles of it, and then choose accordingly; otherwise our adherence to the best religion in the world, will rather be the result of chance than of judgment and choice. Observe, 3. They continued stedfast in fellowship. This may signify and import three things: 1. Their communion with the apostles, their keeping close to their own teachers in opposition to *schism*, which is a causeless, and therefore a culpable, separation; they were obedient to their spiritual governors and instructors. 2. Their society among themselves, and communion one with another: as the communion of saints in heaven is a considerable part of the happiness of heaven, so the fellowship of saints on earth is a sort of heaven upon earth. The comfort of our lives depends much upon society; but more upon the suitableness of society. The primitive saints were all of one mind, and therefore fit to make one body. For though man loves company, yet it is the company of those he loves. 3. Mutual assistance which they gave and received, a communication or free distribution to the necessities of each other: they did by love serve one another, and parted with their possessions for the support of each other. This liberality and mutual supplying one another's wants, did plainly show, that they esteemed themselves as fellow-members of the same body; and that they were perfectly united in heart and affection. Observe, 4. Another religious office, in which they continued constant, was breaking of bread; that is, receiving the sacrament: so great and fervent was the devotion of the first christians, that none of their religious assemblies passed in which they did not make this solemn commemoration of our Saviour, and show forth his death; looking upon their other religious service as lame and defective without this. Our Saviour's blood was still warm, and those first christians kept it so, by their devout and frequent remembrances of it. And it was their constancy in breaking of bread, which quickened and put life into all their religious actions. This fitted them both for doing and dying; their frequent drinking of the blood of Christ fired them with zeal for shedding their blood for Christ. Lord! what reason can men now give for neglecting so holy and useful an institution? Are we above those helps to a good life which they used? Have we not as much need to arm ourselves against sin and temptations, as they had? But the plain

truth is, men are not willing to be so holy now as they were then. This ordinance, their consciences tell them, would engage them to greater strictness of life than they are willing to undergo. They must leave their sins, which they are loath to part with; they must forgive their enemies, whom they had rather be revenged of; they must enter into new engagements, whereas they had rather be at liberty. So that those things which make men loath to come to the sacrament, are indeed, if duly considered, the greatest arguments to draw them thither; and, according to the example of these primitive christians, to be constant in *breaking of bread*. Observe, 5. The last thing which they continued steadfast and constant in, was prayer; that is, in the public and solemn addresses made to God in the religious assemblies, whereby they poured out their souls to God both in prayer, and supplication, and in praise and thanksgivings. The public prayers and intercessions of the church of Christ, are greatly to be esteemed by all christians; they glorify God most, he esteems and accepts them best. This keeps up a sense of God and religion in the world, and nothing delights God more than the joint prayers and praises of his people. Psal. lxxxvii. 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all performances in the dwellings of Jacob.*

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Observe here, 1. What awful respect God obliged the people of Jerusalem to pay unto the apostles: *Fear came upon every soul, at the sight of those wonders and signs which were wrought by the apostles.* 'Tis God that keeps up the authority and reverence of his ministers in the minds of their people: did not he hold these stars in his own right hand, how soon would men trample them under their feet! Observe, 2. An extraordinary instance of a noble charity among these primitive christians: *They had all things common.* That is, they chose rather to part with their estates, than that any of their brethren

should want; the rich very readily sold their possessions and goods to help and relieve the poor. Yet note, 1. That this community was not of all their goods, but of that part only which every one did voluntarily consecrate and devote to the relief of the church's necessities. It was not in a strict sense a community of goods that was here practised; but by *all things* we are to understand such things as every one freely laid aside for the service of the poor. Note, 2. That this practice was only used in Jerusalem in the beginning of christianity, without being a precedent for after-times and places. *Res quæ erat temporariæ necessitatis et liberi arbitrii, non debet in exemplum trahi, multo minus ut necessaria obtrudi.* Christ's gospel doth not destroy the moral law; the eighth commandment is still in force; which it could not be if there were no property. The lesson for your instruction to be gathered from this instance, is this: That they who have ability ought to abound always in ordinary, and sometimes in extraordinary, works of charity; we must always relieve the saints' wants as we are able, and sometimes upon an extraordinary occasion above what we are well able.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

This chapter concludes with giving us an account how these primitive christians spent their time together in the service of God; and in great simplicity and sincerity amongst themselves. They continued daily in the temple; that is, at the usual time of prayer they joined with the Jews in their prayers in the temple. We must not think that they preached sermons, and administered sacraments in the temple; that would not be endured, as appeareth, chap. iv. 1. But having performed their public devotions daily in the temple at the accustomed times of prayer there, they used to resort to a private and particular place to celebrate the Lord's supper, and afterwards took their ordinary and necessary repast with gladness and singleness of heart. And thus these holy christians conversing

together with great simplicity and sincerity, they went on cheerfully in their christian course, praising God for what he had done for them and by them; and their holy and harmless conversation procured them favour with the generality of the people, who had not their hearts possessed with the prejudice against christianity, as the Pharisees had. And thus by the purity of the apostles' doctrine, and the exemplary piety and unblamableness of their lives, the Lord daily added more and more converts to his infant christian church. Learn hence, That the work of a thorough and saving conversion upon the hearts and in the lives of men, is God's work. It was not the mighty rushing, nor the miracle of the fiery cloven tongues, nor St. Peter's sermon, nor any of these, nor all of these, that did or could alone produce this great effect without God and the internal operation of his Holy Spirit. Therefore it is expressly said, That the Lord added to the church; not St. Peter, nor all the apostles. Yet note, 2. That though God and his Holy Spirit be the author and efficient cause, yet the preaching of the gospel, and an exemplary conversation agreeable thereunto, were the subordinate helps and instrumental means conducting thereunto. *They continuing daily in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. And thereby the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

### CHAP. III.

The constituting of the first gospel church, we had recorded in the former chapters. The first persecution raised against that church, is here related in this and the next chapter, together with the occasion of it; which was, St. Peter's healing the lame beggar. No sooner was the primitive church planted, though miraculously, but a persecution is stirred up against it, most maliciously to root it up, and lay it waste: wherever God has his church, the devil will be sure to set up his chapel; not a chapel of ease for the saints, but a chapel of service for himself. Hoping at once to strengthen the walls of his own kingdom, and to raise the foundation of Christ's church, which yet the gates of hell shall never fully nor finally prevail against.

**N**OW Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, *being the ninth hour.*

Observe here, 1. The remarkable diligence and industry of St. Peter and the other apostles in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. At the third hour of the day, on the feast of Pentecost, that is, at nine

o'clock in the morning, St. Peter preached a sermon, chap. ii. 14. which by the blessing of the Holy Spirit accompanying it, converted three thousand souls. Here at three o'clock in the afternoon on the same day, (as the learned Dr. Lightfoot notes) he preached a second sermon, which converts five thousand more. This affords at once a good precedent, and a good encouragement, to the apostle's successors, the ministers of Christ, to the end of the world, for the preaching twice upon the Lord's day: if, in the room of three and five thousand souls, we be instrumental for the conversion of one single soul, it is infinitely worth the indefatigable pains and diligence of our whole lives. Observe, 2. The place which the apostle preaches in, *the temple*; thither the apostles went, not to offer sacrifice, but to inform the Jews, that the law of sacrifices was now abolished by the death of Christ; not to communicate with them in their antiquated worship, but that they might have a larger field to sow the seed of the gospel in. Observe, 3. The circumstance of time; *at the hour of prayer.* In all ages since God had a church in the world, there have been stated times and places for solemn public worship; by which means a sense of God and religion has been preserved and kept up in the world, which otherwise would be in danger of being lost. The worship of God in the closet will not do this, because it is unseen; but stated, solemn, public worship, glorifies God most, and he accepts it best, *Psalm lxxxvii. 2. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob. The apostles went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer.* *Sine stationibus non staret mundus.*

2. And a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3. Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. 4. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. 5. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

Observe here, 1. The condition of this person: 1. He was poor, even to beggary:

but poverty is no sign of God's disfavour, nor doth exclude any from partaking of the best of blessings. 2. He was born a cripple; not lamed by casualty or accident, but lame from his mother's womb. 3. He had continued a cripple forty years, chap. iv. 22. *The man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.* Consequently the cure was the harder, and the person cured the more credible witness against them that cavilled at his cure. Observe, 2. The wonderful mercy and goodness of God towards this poor cripple: his miseries and calamities, his lameness and poverty, are overruled by God for good to him, even for the best good; namely, for bringing him to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and salvation by him. O! how good is God, at making up all our losses, and exceeding not only our deserts, but our expectations also! This poor man only begged an alms, God gives him his limbs; yea, gives him his Son, and salvation by him. Thus we receive of God daily more than we can either ask or think. Observe, 3. The apostle's advice to the lame man, and his ready compliance with that advice; *Look on us*, says St. Peter; he doth not say, Believe on us, but, *Look on us*, and believe on Christ. This the apostle spake to quicken his attention, and excite his hope. As if St. Peter had said, "You look upon many others as able to relieve your necessities: now *look on us*, and see what we can do for you;" accordingly he fastened his eyes upon the apostles, and beheld them as expectant of relief. Here note, 1. The great mercy of God that was mingled with this poor man's affliction; though he was lame, he was not blind. He could and did steadfastly behold the apostles with a fixed eye both of body and mind. Note, 2. That what the cripple could do, he must and did do, towards his own healing. He could not move a foot, but he could fix his eye. We are spiritual cripples, labouring under a moral impotency; being *without strength*, Rom. v. 6. But God expects the exercise of our faculties, and the use of our endeavours, in order to our recovery, help, and healing. As the cripple looked up to the apostles, so may we look up to the ministers of God; hear them, and apply to them, and place ourselves under the word dispensed by them; for he that made us without ourselves, will never save us without ourselves; but we must *work out our own salvation*, Phil. ii. 12.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength. 8 And he leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

Observe here, 1. The poverty of this great apostle St. Peter, and holy contempt of the world; silver and gold he had none; his pretended successor the pope upon his election says the same, but with as little sincerity as he says, *Nolo Episcopari*. The apostle's poverty was real, not fictitious. The holiest, the wisest, and best of men, are seldom the wealthiest. *Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have I give thee*: as if he had said, "I have no money to give thee, but that which is better than money; I have received power from Christ to cure and heal diseases, and having received it freely, I will give it freely: therefore, *in the name of Jesus* (that is, by the power of Jesus, whom in contempt you call Jesus of Nazareth,) be healed, rise up and walk." Observe, 4. The nature of the miracle here wrought: it was, 1. Public and open, not done in a corner, but before all the people at a public time, Pentecost, and at a public place, the gates of the temple. The miracles, that is, the lying wonders, wrought in the church of Rome, will not bear the light. Miracles are by them most pretended to where people are most ignorant, and a dark shop is fittest for their false wares. 2. Instantaneous and sudden: *immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength*. This evidently showed it to be God's work; he was perfectly cured, and instantly cured, though he was lame from his birth, and had continued lame above forty years. All things are easy, yea, equally easy, to an Almighty Power; if God speaks but the word, *the lame shall leap as an hart*, Isa. xxxv. 6. Observe, 3. The humility and faith of this great apostle, discovered in the manner of the cure: his humility, in not disdaining to touch and take hold of, and lift up this poor cripple from the ground; his faith, in being fully persuaded of Christ's presence, relying upon his power, and depending

upon his promise, *Mark* xvi. 18.' 'They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.' The apostles had not a power at their pleasure to work miracles; but when God pleased to work them, he made it known to them by inspiration, and put them upon it. Observe, 4. How the poor cripple piously ascribes the praise of this miracle to God only: *He leaped and praised God*, not the apostles. No instrument must rob God of his glory; we may pay and gratify the messenger, but must return our prime and principal thanks to our benefactor. No doubt the cripple returned thanks to the apostle, but his prayers unto God only. To conceal God's mercies is ingratitude; to attribute them to second causes, is sacrilege.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. 11 And, as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. 12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Observe here, 1. As soon as ever the poor cripple received strength, all the people beheld him praising and blessing God. Learn hence, That the very first appearances of the power and mercy of God towards ourselves or any of ours, should put us upon the works of praise and rejoicing. We truly say, "Better late than never:" but it is best to be early in every good work, especially in the noblest and most angelical work; namely, that of thanksgiving and praise. *My voice shalt thou hear*, says David, *betimes in the morning*: my praying voice, my praising voice. Observe, 2. The influence and effect that this miracle had upon the minds of the multitude, it occasioned wonder, but did not produce faith. *They wondered*, but not believed. Miracles will confirm faith, but not alone

beget it. The Spirit's extraordinary works may produce astonishment; but it is the work of the Spirit that must produce faith. Observe, 3. How the apostle abaseth himself and his fellow-disciples, that he might exalt Christ: he will not suffer the least part of the praise and glory of this miracle to stick to their own fingers, but gives it all to Christ. Think not that we by our own power and holiness have made this man to walk. The Jews had a conceit, that extraordinary holiness would enable a man to work miracles. The apostle denies it: for though there be a great difference betwixt miraculous faith and justifying faith; yet true justifying faith has a miracle in it, though not so obvious to sense, requiring the same power to work it in us which raised up Christ from the dead, *Eph.* i. 11. Learn hence, That Christ's power, not his apostles' holiness, was the cause of all the miracles that were wrought by them. *Why look you so earnestly upon us, as though by our holiness we had made this man to walk?* Through faith in his name is this man made strong, ver. 16.

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead: whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Observe here, 1. How St. Peter lays hold upon this opportunity, (when the people are gathered together to gaze upon this lame beggar,) to preach a second awakening sermon to the Jews, in which he rebukes them sharply for their cursed contempt of Christ, and the horrible indignities offered to him. 1. They denied him, although he was an holy and just one. 2. They delivered him up to Pilate, when he was inclined to let him go. 3. They preferred

Barabbas, the worst of men, and a murderer, before Jesus, the best of men, and a Saviour. 4. They murdered the Messiah, called the *Prince of life*, because he came to bring life into the world. Where note, That though probably none of the Jews then and there present did actually nail Christ unto his cross, yet they having given their consent unto it, they are charged with *killing the Lord of life*. A plenary and full consent to the sins of others, makes us deeply guilty of others' sins. Ver. 15. *Ye delivered up and denied the Holy One; ye have crucified the Lord of life*. Observe, 2. How St. Peter ascribes the whole of this miracle to the power of faith; ver. 16, *Through faith in his name, and the faith which is by him, hath given this man perfect soundness in the presence of you all*. Faith is twice named in this one verse, because of the apostle's faith in working the miracle, and the cripple's faith in receiving of it, says Dr. Lightfoot. But questionless, it was chiefly the apostle's faith; for the lame man showed no faith in Christ before he was healed; he expected an alms, but little thought of receiving the use of his limbs; but the apostle firmly relying on the power and promise of Christ for healing, did believe that Christ could and would help and heal him. Learn hence, That as it is the property and prerogative of God to do great things, it is the duty and property of faith to expect great things from God: great expectations from God honour the greatness of God; we dishonour God as much, or more, when we believe little, as when we do little. A great God and a small faith suit not well together: accordingly, St. Peter here, knowing the all-sufficiency of Christ's power, exerts strength of faith, and through faith in the name of Christ makes this man whole.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as *did* also your rulers. 18 But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

Observe here, 1. How careful the apostle was, not to drive these murderers of Christ (and consequently the worst of men) to despair, but to draw them to repentance; in order to which, 1. He mitigates their sin, imputing it rather to ignorance and blind zeal, than to malice. 2. He is so

charitable as to impute it to the ignorance of the Pharisees, their rulers also. 3. He calls them brethren, though guilty of so great a mistake in their judgment, and fault in their practice. *Now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers*. Learn thence, That God used the ignorance of some, and malice of others, for his own glorious ends, in accomplishing the fore-ordained and foretold death of our Redeemer. Observe, 2. St. Peter acquaints them, to keep them from despair, that God had decreed the sufferings of Christ for man, and by his prophets foretold them, who, as they spake by one Spirit, did all speak the same things, as if they had all spoken out of one mouth. So that what the Jews did, he tells them, was, though unknown to them, a fulfilling of ancient prophecies and promises for man's redemption. *Those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he has now fulfilled*. The death and sufferings of Christ, with all the circumstances relating thereunto, were all ordained by God, and foretold by the prophets; which though it doth not excuse his murderers from the guilt of a dreadful sin, yet may be improved as an argument to keep them from despair. *What God before had showed, he hath now fulfilled*.

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

The apostle, like a wise physician, having discovered to the Jews the danger of their disease in the foregoing verses, now directs them to the only effectual remedy, viz. repentance: *Repent, and be converted*: that is, Repent of your rejecting Jesus Christ, and be converted to true christianity. To repent doth denote a change of the mind and judgment; and to be converted, a change in the life and conversation. The exhortation doth denote our duty, and supposes our ability also, by the assistance of that grace which will never be wanting to sincere endeavours. They were subjects recipient of that *Vis gratiæ verticordiae*, as St. Austin calls it, "The heart-changing power of the grace of God," which could and did enable them to convert and turn to God. Note farther, How this duty of repentance is urged from the effect and



fruit, and profitable consequents of it. 1. *Your sins shall be blotted out*; a metaphor taken from creditors, which have the books of accounts in which all debts and reckonings are set down. 2. *The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*: by which some understand more generally the times of the gospel, others more particularly understand it of the time of Jerusalem's destruction; as if St Peter had said, "Know, O my brethren, that the time of Christ's coming to Jerusalem to execute vengeance on his murderers is now at hand! Repent therefore speedily of what you have done; that those dreadful days to his enemies, may be days of refreshment to you." But the days of refreshment are thought by most to signify the day of Judgment, which will be a day of refreshing all penitent sinners; because they shall then enjoy a full and complete absolution from all their sins. Note here, 1. That Almighty God has his book of remembrance, in which he writes down all the sins which every person commits, in order to their accusation and charge. 2. That it is the great wisdom, interest, and duty of every person to take care that he gets his sins now blotted out of God's debt-book, as he ever hopes that the reckoning day may be a day of refreshing to him. 3. That without repentance, conversion, and turning unto God, there will be no forgiveness, comfort, or refreshment from him. *Repent, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshment shall come.* 4. That a complete absolution and full discharge from all sin is not yet enjoyed, till the day of judgment. We are in this life continually subject to new sins; and consequently are daily contracting new guilt, whereby arise new fears; so that a soul has not a full rest till the final absolution be pronounced at that solemn day.

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:  
21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Here St. Peter enforces his exhortation to repentance with a strong motive, namely, the certainty of Christ's coming to judge the world. *God shall send Jesus*; this

Jesus whom we preach to you, visibly to justify and glorify all penitent and pardoned sinners, whom yet *the heaven must contain till the restitution of all things*; that is, to the end of the world, when the whole creation which now groaneth will be delivered, and man particularly restored to God, to himself, and to a blessed immortality. Learn hence, That Christ, being ascended into heaven in our human nature, shall abide and continue there until the restitution of all things; and his corporal presence here on earth is not to be expected, until he has put all his enemies under his feet. Now if his body be, and must continue in heaven, surely then it is not in the sacrament, as the papists dream; who ascribe to Christ's human nature the property of a Godhead, namely, to be in ten thousand places at one and the same time, contrary to the nature of an human body. If the heavens must contain Christ, Christ must be contained in heaven, and then his presence in the sacraments doth not draw him from heaven; his bodily presence is in heaven, his spiritual presence with his people in the sacrament.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.

These words are recorded, *Deut. xviii. 15.* and hereby St. Peter pertinently applied to Christ, to convince the unbelieving Jews, that he is the true and only Messiah, the great prophet and teacher of his church, whose doctrine it was highly dangerous to condemn, though out of the mouth of such contemptible persons as he and St. John appeared to be unto them. Where note, 1. Christ according to his prophetic office is largely described, and that three ways: 1. By his title, a *Prophet*, one that by his office is to declare the whole will of God to man. 2. By his type, a *Prophet like unto Moses*; one that went between God and the people, as Moses did, carrying God's mind to them, and returning their mind to God. As Moses was faithful in the execution of his office, so was Christ. As Moses confirmed his doctrine by miracles, so did

Christ. As Moses brought Israel out of literal Egypt, so Christ brings us out of spiritual Egypt, whereof the Egyptian bondage was a figure. 3. By his stock and original, from which according to the flesh he sprang; *I will raise him up from among thy brethren*. Christ honoured the nation of the Jews, and the tribe of Judah, with his nativity. Thus this great Prophet is described. Note, 2. A strict injunction to hear and obey this great Prophet; hear him only, hear him universally. The word *him*, is to be understood exclusively, him and none but him; that is, in the same manner that we hear him, *him* for his own authority's sake, his ministers for his sake, as speaking from him, and in his name; and we must hear him universally, in all things,—every command is to be obeyed, none to be disputed; be the duty commanded never so difficult, and the sin forbidden never so tempting. Note, 3. A severe commination: *The soul that will not hear shall be cut off*. That is, God will severely revenge himself upon the stubborn and disobedient. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is constituted and appointed by God to be the great prophet and teacher of his church. He reveals the will of God perfectly, powerfully, persuasively, plainly, and infallibly. Learn, 2. That it is the duty of all to hear and obey the voice of this great Prophet, and this under the penalty of eternal destruction: *Every soul that will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people*.

24. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

That is, "All the prophets from Moses to Samuel, and particularly Isaiah the evangelical prophet, did foretell the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, the special mercies to them that believe on him, and the destruction of those that reject him." Where note, That Samuel is mentioned as the first prophet between them, because he was the first prophet after Moses that wrote his prophecy, and first erected the schools of the prophets.—Learn hence, That Christ was the sum of the law as well as the substance of the gospel; all the legal sacrifices pointed at him, all the prophets prophesied of him, and received their completion in him. He was Abel's Sacrifice, Isaac's Ram, Isaiah's

Emmanuel, Daniel's Holy One, Zechariah's Branch, and Malachi's Angel.

25. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed,

Still observe, How sweetly St. Peter invites and encourages these murderers of Christ to repentance: the worst of men must neither be driven to despair, nor be too hastily despaired of. He tells them they were the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with whom God first entered into covenant, and consequently they were children of the covenant, and also children of the prophets; that is the people to whom God primarily and chiefly sent the prophets. So great were the prerogatives of the Jews, that they are called the children of the prophets, children of the promise, children of the covenant, children of the kingdom. But the higher a people are exalted by spiritual privileges, the lower they fall if they miscarry.

26 Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Here note, 1. That the offer of Jesus Christ and eternal salvation by him, was first made to the people of the Jews, because they were the children of the covenant; that is, the only people in visible communion with God throughout the whole world. Note, 2. The benefit offered; God's Son is raised up; that is, either, 1. Authorized, consecrated, and appointed to be a Saviour; or, 2. Raised from the grave. You crucified him with wicked hands: but behold the divine clemency! He is first offered to you his crucifiers; God has sent his Son in the preaching of the gospel first to you; and this not to take vengeance on you, but to bless you. He being the great High-priest, blesses authoritatively and effectually; and the blessing he dispenses is not a temporal blessing, as you expected, a pompous Messiah, a secular kingdom, but spiritual, in turning souls from sin to God; he offers to bless you by turning every one of you from your iniquities. Learn hence, 1. That it is Christ's proper work to turn sinners from their iniquities. O! that we would all sub-

serve Christ in that great work ! He is the principal agent ; let us be subordinate instruments, by practising holiness ourselves, and promoting holiness in others. Learn, 2. That to be turned by Christ from our iniquities, is the greatest blessing we can receive from him ; because 'tis a spiritual blessing, a fundamental blessing, a comprehensive blessing, an endearing blessing, an everlasting blessing.

#### CHAP. IV.

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of a miraculous cure wrought by the apostles upon a cripple that was lame from his birth. This chapter acquaints us how exceedingly the governors both in church and state were offended and enraged thereat, to such a degree, that they imprison the apostles, and raise a persecution against the church ; which yet God over-ruled for his own glory, and his church's increase. This infant gospel church in the time of the apostles, being like unto the infant Jewish church in Egypt in the days of Moses : the more the church was molested, the more she multiplied ; the more they were oppressed, the more they increased.

**A**ND as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2. Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day : for it *was* now even-tide. 4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed ; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Observe here, 1. How the apostles' preaching to, and instructing the people, stirs up the devil's rage, and brings upon themselves a severe persecution. Well might Luther say, *Quid est Evangelium prædicare ; nisi in nos furem Diaboli derivare ?* "At the preaching of the gospel the gates of Satan's prison fly open, and the walls of his kingdom are shaken ; he finds himself in danger of losing his principality." No wonder then that he raises all the powers of hell, and stirs up all his instruments on earth, to stop the mouths of the preachers of the gospel. Observe, 2. The persons by whom, and the cause for which, this persecution was now stirred up against the apostles ; namely, the Jewish priests, the Gentile captain, and the sottish Sadducees : *As they spake, the captain of the temple, the priests and Sadducees, came upon them.*

These were distinct persons, and they were differently distasted ; The *captain*, who was placed with a band of soldiers near the temple to guard it was offended for fear of a tumult, from such a vast appearance of people as came to see the recovered cripple. The *priests* were offended, because the apostles being private men, went about publicly to teach and instruct the people, not considering the extraordinary call which the apostles had. The *Sadducees* were displeased, because they preached the resurrection from the dead, a doctrine which they denied ; and because they preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead, that is through the power and efficacy of Jesus ; asserting Christ to be both the efficient and also the exemplary cause of the resurrection ; and inferring from Christ's resurrection, that all his followers should arise with him, and be like unto him. Observe, 3. How far God suffered these persecutors and this persecution to proceed : *They laid hands upon them ; and put them in hold.* How easily might this band of soldiers have taken away the lives as well as imprisoned the bodies of the apostles ! But God restrained them, and led on the apostles to their sufferings gradually ; they were yet but young pupils in Christ's school, therefore they shall not have trials beyond their strength. God will not call his servants to a martyr's fire till he has first endued them with a martyr's faith ; for this reason God suffered not the storm of persecution to break forth with overmuch violence upon this new planted church at first. Observe, 4. What was the event of that violence which was now offered to the apostles : God overruled it for his church's advantage, and a wonderful increase by a new addition of five thousand souls more added to it. O ! wonderful draught of fishes at the second casting out of the gospel-net ! These fishermen, Peter and John, now became by the help of the Holy Spirit fishers of men, according to their Master's prediction, Matt. iv. 19. *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Many which heard the word believed, and the number of them was about five thousand.* ver. 4. This infant church flourished the more by the frownings of men upon her. *Plures efficitur, quoties metimur ab illis.* Tertul. "Like a green meadow, which, the oftener it is mowed, springs the faster, and becomes the thicker."

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and el-

ders, and scribes, 6 And Annas the high-priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high-priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; 10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Here observe, 1. What a combined force did unite and join together, of *rulers, elders, scribes, high-priests, high-priests' kindred*, and who not! They all, though of different interests, yet hold together as one to extinguish and put out the light of the gospel, as soon as it began to shine forth. Need we wonder that the devil struggled so hard at the dawning of the Reformation to blow out the light of the gospel; when we consider what opposition he discovered against the first plantation and propagation of the gospel? As Herod would have strangled Christ in his cradle, so would the high-priests have stifled christianity in its infancy: *They all gathered together at Jerusalem*. Sad! that a message of such glad tidings as the gospel, should meet with so bad entertainment. Observe, 2. How the apostles are here arraigned and questioned, By what name and authority; that is, By what power or virtue, they had done this? Some think, they suspected the apostles to have wrought by the black art, being assisted by the devil. But did not this miracle give a sufficient convincing light, to demonstrate that it was heaven-born, and showed evidently that it was wrought by a superna-

tural and divine power?—Cursed men! who accounted it a credit for themselves to do evil, make it a crime for the apostles to do good! Was there any reason for their asking, by *what power*? when the thing itself proclaimed it to be done by the power of God? Observe, 3. The bold and resolute answer of St. Peter to the foregoing malicious and ridiculous question. Where note, 1. His holy courage. 2. The cause of it, *He was filled with the Holy Ghost*. In the fifth and sixth verses, we find a full bench, not of justices, but of professed enemies, enough to have dashed ten prisoners at the bar out of countenance. But behold the ingenuous and holy boldness of a good christian in a good cause. St. Peter, who formerly, when full of himself, was baffled by a damsel, and frightened into a denial of Christ by a silly wench; now being *filled with the Holy Ghost*, silences and confounds his most potent and malicious accusers. Lord! how woefully weak are we when we rely on our own strength! but how able to do all things, when Christ strengthens us! “*In te stas et non stas*, says St. Austin.” “Thou art sure to come down when thou standest on thine own legs; but shalt be mightily upheld and carried on, when supported and conducted by God’s hand.” Observe, 4. A singular instance of the apostles’ boldness; namely, in preaching Jesus Christ to them that had imprisoned them. Be it known unto you, that *this Jesus, whom ye crucified, is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, and is become the head of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other, &c.* Where note, 1. The title given to the rulers of the Jewish church, *builders*; so they were by office, and here are called so, to remind them of their duty, namely, to increase, strengthen, and beautify the building, *the church of God*; not to demolish, weaken, or deface it. Note, 2. The contempt which these builders cast upon *Christ the chief corner-stone*; they refused him and set him at nought, according to the prophecy, *Psal. cxviii. 22.* which was a prophecy of the rejection of the Messiah, though the Jews would not so understand it; for they dreamt of such a pompous Messiah coming, according to their hearts’ desire, that it should be incredible that any Jews should ever reject or despise him. Note, 3. The title given to Christ, *the corner-stone*; so called, because he supports and sustains the whole building; and as the corner-

stone is equally necessary for both sides of the building, which are united to it, and borne up by it, in like manner both Jew and Gentile are united in Christ, and saved by him.

12 Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Observe here, 1. A positive assertion, that there is no salvation but by Christ ; or, that besides, or without him, there is no possibility of salvation, either for Jew or Gentile : both those under the Old Testament had, and we under the New Testament have, one and the same common Saviour. Observe, 2. The ground and reason of this confident assertion, That there is no salvation but by Christ ; namely, *Because there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.* That is, no other person designed or appointed by God, to be the author of redemption to, and procurer of salvation for, a lost and miserable world, but only Christ. Take we good heed then, that we do not reject or set him at nought, for in rejecting of Christ, we reject the wisdom of God, the authority of God, the love of God, yea, the salvation of God

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled ; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 Saying, What shall we do to these men ? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem ; and we cannot deny it. 17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. 18 And they called them, and commanded them

not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Observe here, 1. How convincing the boldness of the apostles was, together with the undeniable evidence of the miracle wrought by them : When the counsel observed both, they marvelled, the apostles being unlearned men, yet able to speak all languages ; and the cripple born lame, now able to leap and walk. These men were convinced, but not converted ; silenced, but not satisfied ; they marvelled but not believed ; they were full of admiration, but far from faith. The evidence of the fact, with the courage of the apostles, stopped their mouths at present, but did not cure their hard hearts. Observe, 2. At what a nonplus the counsel was to know what to do with the apostles : they confess the miracle, but consult upon ways and means how to conceal it ; and at last conclude upon threatening them, That for the time to come they speak no more in the name of Jesus ; that is, not to preach in his name, nor work miracles by a power and authority derived pretendedly from him. But the apostles soon let them understand, that they esteemed not the threatenings of the counsel, nor looked upon them as any excuse for the forbearing of their duty ; as appeareth by the next words.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Observe here the prudence and integrity of the apostles in referring it back to the judgment of their very adversaries, whether it was reasonable to obey their command, when they charged them to preach no more in the name of the Lord Jesus. As if the apostles had said, " We have received a command from God to preach, *Go teach all nations*, Matt. xxviii. 19. and we have received a command from you not to preach : now we leave it with you whether it be fittest and most reasonable to obey God or you ? " It is a strong way of conviction, to refer a matter to their judgment and conscience, against whom we make opposition. Learn, That when the commands of God's vicegerents run counter

to the commands of God himself, God is to be obeyed, and not man.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people : for all men glorified God for that which was done. 22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed. 23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. 24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is ; 25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things ? 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27 For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. 29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings : and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal : and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

Here observe, 1. That notwithstanding this rational plea which the apostles used, the council added further threatenings, and so dismissed them, *because of the people*, who looked upon the miracle with admiration, and glorified God for working it by the apostles' hands. Where note, That it was not the sense of sin, nor any apprehensions of God's displeasure that influenced the council to set the apostles at liberty ;

but either the fear or favour of the people. Thus God made the people a restraint to the rulers' rage. Observe, 2. That the apostles, thus dismissed, went immediately to their own company, (that is, to the hundred and twenty mentioned, chap. i. 15.) and acquainted them both with their danger and deliverance, the better to prepare them for sufferings, and encourage them to hope for the like support under them. Observe, 3. What use the church makes thereof ; they hearing how their enemies lay in wait to persecute and destroy them, apply themselves to God by fervent prayer. Thence learn, That it is the church's duty, when enemies combine together to do mischief, to give themselves much unto prayer. Thus did the church here, and the like, chap. xii. Observe, 4. The prayer itself which they jointly put up at the throne of grace, with one heart and spirit. And here note, 1. They began their prayer with invocation, and reverent compellation, suitable to their present sufferings ; adoring God's omnipotency in creating and governing of the world. *Lord ! thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is therein.* Whence learn, That the power and wisdom of God in creating and governing the world, doth afford singular support and comfort under the sense of present or future sufferings. He that made all things by his power, will overrule all things by his providence for his own glory and his church's good. Note, 2. The apostles used scripture language and expressions in their prayer : they allude to *Psalm ii.* and acknowledge that all that enraged malice of men and devils against the Messias, which was foretold long ago by the prophet David, was now come to pass : for both the Jewish counsel and the Roman governors had combined together against Christ, and in opposing him had opposed the Father that sent him. *Of a truth, against the holy child Jesus are they gathered together, to do what thy hand and thy counsel had determined before to be done.* Where we see, 1. That all the sufferings of Christ were fore-ordained and determined by God the Father ; God from all eternity decreed that Christ should die a sacrifice for sin. 2. That this decree of God did not necessitate the Jews to sin ; but they acted freely and voluntarily according to the wicked determinations of their own wills. God foresaw and permitted it, but no ways influenced or compelled them to it. He over-

ruled those evil instruments to fulfil his holy purposes, while they intended only to fulfil their own wicked counsels. Observe lastly, They close their prayer with a fervent petition, that God would strengthen them, and glorify his Son. 1. That God would strengthen them against their fears; steel them with courage, and fortify them with impregnable resolution. *Grant that with all boldness we may speak thy word.* Boldness to preach the gospel, when unjustly forbidden, is a special gift of God, and a great effect of God's grace unto his servants. 2. They request that God would magnify, not them, but his Son by them, in giving them power to work miraculous cures in the name of Jesus, for confirming of the gospel: *Grant that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.* Where note, That the gift of miracles, though promised by Christ, is yet prayed for by the apostles. God will have the performance of his promises to be the answer of our prayers.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. 32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and

brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Observe here, 1. The special and speedy answer which the Lord gave to the apostles' prayer: as a testimony thereof, the place where they prayed is miraculously shaken, and many eminent graces and special gifts of the Holy Spirit were poured out upon the apostles, particularly a greater measure of boldness to preach the gospel; and, as some think, the wonderful gift of conferring the Holy Ghost was now conferred upon the twelve; so Dr. Lightfoot. The Holy Spirit, which caused them thus to pray, gave them that holy boldness which they prayed for; with signal shaking of the place which they prayed in. O! how ready is God to hear and answer the prayers and pleading of his righteous servants, especially when suffering for righteousness' sake! Observe, the great unity and happy unanimity which was found amongst the ministers and members of this infant church, this purest and most primitive christian church: *They were of one heart and of one soul.* That is, they were one in doctrine and opinion, and they were one in heart and affection! A singular pattern for succeeding christians to the end of the world, so to carry it one towards another, as members of the same body, and influenced by the same head. Observe, 3. As their unanimity, so their liberality, in contributing to the necessities of each other: *They called nothing their own*, when their brethren's wants required it; the rich readily sold their possessions and goods, to help and relieve the poor. Notwithstanding, this example cannot be a copy for aftertimes, to follow as a command, or to imitate as a perfection; seeing that such was the state of the church at that time, as was never since, nor like to be; it was but newly born, it was all in one city, all in a possibility to be soon scattered by persecution: *Res quæ erat temporariæ necessitatis & liberi arbitrii, non debet in exemplum trahi, multo minus ut necessaria obtrudi.* The lesson to be gathered, from this instance, for our instruction, is this, That those who are of ability ought to abound always in ordinary, and sometimes in extraordinary, acts of charity. We must always relieve the saints' wants as we are able, and sometimes upon an extraordinary occasion above what we are well able.—Observe, 4. How the apostles with great authority and assurance gave

testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and their doctrine found great favour and acceptance with the people, ver. 33. *With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.* The resurrection of Christ from the dead, was the great point now in controversy; therefore with evident miracles and wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit, did the apostles perform their testimony of his resurrection. So that as Christ was declared to the apostles to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead; in like manner, the apostles, by miracles and wonderful gifts, did bear witness to the certainty of our Saviour's resurrection, and their doctrine found acceptance with the people. Learn hence, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ, by the almighty power of his Godhead, revived and rose again from the dead, to the consternation of his enemies, and the consolation of all believers. 2. That the doctrine of Christ's resurrection being not only attested by the preaching, but confirmed by the miracles of the apostles, found deservedly belief in the world, and is a point of infallible certainty amongst all those whom wilful obstinacy has not blinded.

#### CHAP. V.

**B**UT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

The last verses of the foregoing chapter acquainted us with the practice of the primitive christians at the first plantation of the gospel, in selling their possessions for charitable uses, and laying down the money at the apostles' feet, for the relief of their fellow brethren and members in Christ. Now this chapter informs us, That accord-

ing to their example, one Ananias, and Sapphira his wife, consecrated a possession unto God, and sold the same to that purpose, but fundamentally kept back part of the price; and thus, as St. Chrysostom notes, was found stealing his own goods. He had the formality to sell his lands, as others did; but had not the sincerity to part with his money as others had. Observe here, The true nature of Ananias's sin: it was sacrilege; that is, a purloining or stealing of that which was consecrated unto God; not by actual performance, but by vow and inward purpose of heart. Covetousness and vain-glory, lying and hypocrisy, did all attend and accompany this sin; but the sin itself was sacrilege. Learn hence, 1. That what is consecrated to God must not be alienated or applied to other uses. 2. That such an alienation is sacrilege, and a sin against God, being a breach of vow or promise made unto him; *a lying unto God*, as the text calls it. 3. That it is an heinous sin, which God will severely punish. Observe, 2. How this secret sin, lying in the intention of the heart, was known to God, and by divine revelation made known to St. Peter. Learn thence, That not only our outward actions are taken notice of by God, but even the purposes and intents of our hearts are all manifest and open to him, and thoroughly understood by him. Observe, 3. How St. Peter justly aggravates their sin, from the divinity of the Person (the Holy Ghost) against whom it was committed, *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God.* But why is Ananias said to lie unto the Holy Ghost rather than to God the Father, or Jesus Christ the Son? *Ans.* Either, 1. Because it is the proper work of the Spirit to search the heart, and to know the thoughts and purposes thereof: or, 2. Because the wealth brought in to the apostles, and laid at their feet, was an effect of the Holy Spirit's inclining the hearts of believers so to do. Learn hence, The divinity of the Holy Ghost, that he is truly and really God: he whom the scripture calls the great and true God, is God; but the scripture calls the Holy Ghost, the great and true God: therefore the Holy Ghost is God. Either the Holy Ghost is man, and God's messenger, or God himself; but the antithesis or opposite shows, that he is not man, for, says the apostle, *Thou hast not lied unto man*; and if the Holy Ghost had been only



God's messenger, it had been as great a sin to lie to Peter (he being God's extraordinary messenger) as to lie to the Holy Ghost; therefore the apostle in the fourth verse doth explain what he meant by lying to the Holy Ghost in the third verse, namely, lying unto God; *Thou hast not lied unto man*, a creature like thyself, *but unto God*, even to the Holy Ghost, who is God.

5 And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the Ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Observe here, 1. The justice of the punishment inflicted upon Ananias for his sin: he is struck dead upon the spot for his sacrilege, covetousness, hypocrisy, and lying. Doubtless it was a very heinous sin which God so severely punished, and it was the first sin of this kind under the new testament. This was the first consecration of goods that ever was made unto Christ our Lord, after he was exalted at the right hand of God in heaven; and this was the first sacrilege: the first sin of this kind, and therefore the first persons that were found guilty of it met with this severity *in terrorem*, to make all others afraid of it. The first transgressors in any kind have been

made public examples. Thus the angels before the Jewish church; Nadab and Abihu at the beginning of the Jewish church; and Ananias and Sapphira at the beginning of the Christian church. Observe, 2. How Sapphira the wife's subjection to her husband doth not excuse her from partaking in his sin, nor exempt her from the severity of the punishment. God's authority in commanding or forbidding, must be firm, observed and obeyed; otherwise we put the creature in God's place, debase him, and set up an idol, which the jealousy and holiness of God will never endure. Observe, 3. How the same sin meets with the same punishment: husband and wife had here agreed both what to do and what to say, and they that sinned together suffered together. God is no respecter of persons, male or female, Jew or Gentile, prince or subject, husband or wife; the soul that sinneth, it shall die; *Then fell she down straightway at his feet and yielded up the Ghost*, v. 10. Observe, 4. That this miraculous way of punishing offenders with immediate death by the apostles, was not common; this is the only instance in the New Testament of so severe a punishment inflicted by the mouth of the apostles for any sin whatsoever, and it seems accommodated and suited to that particular time, in which magistrates were so far from defending the church, that they furthered the persecution, and endeavoured the extirpation of it. Observe lastly, The effect which this tremendous miracle had upon the whole church; it awfully affected them with fear and trembling; *Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things*. God's extraordinary providences, either judgments or mercies, towards ourselves or towards others, ought to affect us with holy fear, and that fear which works righteousness. Isa. xxvi. 9. *When his judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*; that is, they ought to do so, and if ever they will do it, they will do it then. Judgments work fear, and fear works righteousness.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified

them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women; 15 Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

Three things are here observable: 1. How that act of severity upon Ananias and Sapphira for their hypocrisy, is instantly succeeded with acts of clemency and mercy upon others: the former acts of severity in the apostles, were necessary to prevent the intrusion of hypocrites into the christian church; these subsequent acts of mercy were as necessary for the propagating of the gospel, and to invite people to the love of christianity. Accordingly the apostles after the death of Ananias are endued with power from on high to work signs and wonders, to heal diseases, to cast out devils; insomuch that the people brought forth their sick into the streets, and laid them upon beds and couches, hoping that the shadow of Peter as he passed by might reach and cover some of them. The church of Rome makes a noise with this text, and produces it to prove St. Peter's supremacy over the rest of the apostles, because his very shadow cured the diseased. But very groundlessly; for, 1. By the same argument they may prove St. Peter to be superior to Christ himself; this being more than what Christ himself wrought, according to what he foretold; St. John xiv. 12. *Greater works than these shall ye do, &c.* 2. The papists might observe, were they not wilfully blind, that the napkins and handkerchiefs which were carried from St. Paul's body, cured diseases also, and dispossessed devils, Acts xix. 12. 3. Besides all this, it is not here expressly said that any sick were actually healed by St. Peter's shadow, but that the diseased were brought, in hopes that his shadow might produce such effects; and if it did so, Almighty God thereby put honour upon the gospel, and upon all the apostles, without any particular respect or special regard to the person

of St. Peter. Observe, 2. The place where the apostles assembled to preach the gospel, and work miracles for the confirmation of the same: *They are all with one accord in Solomon's porch.* Where note, 1. Their unity and unanimity: there were no persons among them guilty of schismatical separation in forsaking the public assembly; but with one mouth, as well as with one mind and heart, they glorified God. 2. Their prudential boldness and holy courage appeared in preaching to the people in Solomon's porch; for the Sanhedrim, or Great Council, sat in or very near that place, even that council which in the former chapter imprisoned them, and in this beat them. See ver. 43. Learn thence, That nothing better becomes the ministers and messengers of Jesus Christ, than an holy and humble, a wise and meek, a zealous and convincing boldness, in asserting the truths of the gospel, and in reproving sin, and denouncing judgments against impenitent sinners. Consider we, how bold and zealous our Lord and Master was in his ministry, Luke xx. 21. *We know that thou teachest the way of God truly, and acceptest not the person of any.* And the apostles learnt the same of their Master, Acts iv. 13. *When the high-priest saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.* Observe, 3. How God overruled the judgment inflicted upon Ananias and Sapphira, and caused it to work for special good. Thus, such of the apostles' hearers, who were unsound and insincere, durst not join themselves to them, having seen a great instance of severity upon concealed hypocrisy: they were afraid to come among them any more, or to make a show of such piety and zeal as Ananias did, for fear of the same or such like punishment as he had. But, however, the people extolled and magnified, admired and applauded them, and multitudes were daily added to the church. This seems to be the sense of verse 13. *And of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them; and believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.* Nothing doth more affect and afflict unsound and drossy hypocrites, than the sight of God's judgments inflicted upon others in this world, and the fear of the righteous judgment of God upon themselves in the world to come.

17 Then the high-priest rose up,

and all they that were with him, which is the sect of the Sadducees, and were filled with indignation, 18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison-doors, and brought them forth, and said, 20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

Note here, 1. How the persecutions of the holy apostles did gradually advance and increase. In the former chapters the apostles were only secured, kept in hold for a night, and dismissed with a threatening the next day; but now being filled a second time with the Holy Spirit, they are better enabled to grapple with sufferings, and to glorify God under them; and accordingly here they are committed to the common prison amongst malefactors, and afterwards beaten and exposed to public shame, ver. 40. O the tenderness of God towards his tender servants! While these apostles were striplings, their faith feeble, and their grace weak, God stayeth the rough wind, keeps off the storm of persecution from them, God will evermore suit the stroke to his people's strength, proportion their burden to their back, and never suffer them to be tempted above what they are able. Note, 2. The apostles being prisoners for Christ and his gospel, they have an angel for their keeper and deliverer, who opens the prison door, and overpowers and puts out the devil. God could otherwise have delivered them, but he makes use of the ministry of angels for the confirming of their faith, and to let them see by experience that he had given his angels charge over them. Since the establishment of the gospel, God will have us live more by faith, and to walk less by sense, and therefore we must not now (ordinarily) see those ministering and beneficent spirits; but although their visible apparitions be ceased, yet their invisible operations for the heirs of salvation shall never cease, Heb. i. ult. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* Note, 3. The apostles being thus brought out of prison by an angel, are commanded to preach, and they have their text given them by the angel that opened both the prison and the pulpit door for

them. The angel said unto them, *Go and speak unto the people all the words of this life*, ver. 20. That is, of this life for which you are imprisoned; this life which the Sadducees, who imprisoned you, deny; namely, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life. Learn, That not the things of this life, but the things of eternity and the life to come, the unseen things of another world, are the things which all the ministers of Christ ought to preach, and press their people to the pursuit of: *Go, and speak unto the people all the words of this life*. That is, the gospel, which is the word of life, and directs them how to attain eternal life and salvation by Jesus Christ.

21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high-priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, 23 Saying, the prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. 24 Now when the high-priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. 26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high-priest asked them, 28 Saying, did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

Observe here, 1. No sooner were the apostles out of prison, but they enter into the temple and preach, with a redoubled zeal and diligence; no doubt, Satan had better have let these holy men alone, than have cast them into prison; for the cold blast of persecution and imprisonment beating upon their outward man, by a spiritual antiperistasis, augmented the heat of grace within. There is no such way to be even with the devil and his instruments, for all their spite and malice against us, as by doing all the good we can to the souls of men. Observe, 2. How the deliverance which God wrought for the apostles, in bringing them miraculously out of prison by the conduct of an angel, did confound the council which laid them in; they were nonplussed and horribly perplexed at it: *They doubted whereunto this would grow.* They stood amused and amazed, and knew not what measures to take; but were at their wit's end. Sin oft-times brings men into straits, but straits do not always bring men off from their sins. Thus here notwithstanding their present perplexity of spirit, they spur on, and bring them again before the council, ver. 26. *Then went the captain with the officers of the temple, and brought them without violence.* Observe, 3. The crimes which the holy apostles were unjustly accused of; namely, obstinacy and sedition. They are charged with obstinacy for persisting to preach the gospel, when they had strictly (but very wickedly) forbidden them; and they are accused of sedition, as if they endeavoured to stir up the people to avenge the blood of Christ upon the rulers, as being unjustly shed by them. The greatest innocence cannot protect the holiest persons from slander and false accusation. The best of men have sometimes been charged with the blackest of crimes. No wonder that the Sanhedrim, or Great Council, which charged Christ himself with imposture and blasphemy, did accuse the apostles of sedition and contumacy: *The disciple is not above his Master.* Observe, 4. The countenourous reflection which they had made upon our Lord Jesus Christ himself; *You intend, says the council, to bring this man's blood upon us.* As if the Lord Jesus had not been worthy the naming by them. Christ told his disciples, *Luke vi. 22.* that the world should cast out their name as evil. Behold! his own is used no better: he is *Homo nullius nominis*. This man, this fellow, this deceiver, were the oppro-

brious titles which the learned rabbies thought fit to impose upon the best man that ever the world had. Lord! how can we be abased enough for thee, who was so degraded and debased for us?

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand, *to be a Prince and a Saviour,* for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is also the Holy Ghost,* whom God hath given to them that obey him. 33 When they heard *that,* they were cut *to the heart,* and took counsel to slay them.

To the foregoing charge of obstinacy brought in against the apostles, St. Peter answers in the name, and as the mouth, of the rest; owning that they had not obeyed them in their injunctions, because they had commanded that which was contrary to the command of God. Where observe, How the apostles assert the prerogative of Christ, and their apology for their disobedience to human commands: *We ought to obey God rather than man.* The second part of the charge was sedition: as if the apostles endeavoured to stir up the people to revenge the blood of Christ upon the chief priests and rulers. Thence note, That it is no new thing to tax the ministers of Christ for preaching sedition, when rulers design to stop their mouths, and not suffer them to preach at all. But to remove this part of the charge, the apostle tells them, That this Jesus whom they ignominiously slew on earth, is now an exalted Prince in heaven, able to give repentance and remission of sins to the worst of his murderers, if they unfeignedly desire it: *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance,* &c. Whence learn, 1. That Jesus will be a Saviour to none to whom he is not a Prince. We must submit ourselves to his ruling power, as well as commit ourselves to his saving mercy. For it is in vain to expect salvation by him if we do not yield subjection to him. 2. That repentance and remission of sins are

the special fruits and advantages of Christ's exaltation : *Him hath God exalted, to give repentance and remission of sins.* Learn, 3. That it is the sole prerogative of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give repentance and remission of sins. Where note, The encouragement which the apostles' ministry gave to the murderers of Christ to hope for pardon ; he preaches the duty of repentance and the privilege of remission of sins, but assureth them for their comfort, that Christ stands ready to dispense both. But observe the sad effects which this sermon had upon these hearers ; it was for substance the same which St. Peter preached, chap. ii. when so many thousands were pricked at the heart by sorrow and compunction ; whereas these men were cut to the heart with anger and indignation. Whence learn, 1. That the most sound and sacred doctrine is an intolerable torment to an unsound and unholy heart. 2. That the word of God dispensed by the same minister, and in the same manner, has not always the same success. The substance of both these sermons was the same, Jesus and the resurrection ; and the preacher, St. Peter, was the same : but the success was not the same ; to let the apostle know, that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of himself, as St. Paul speaks, 2. Cor. iv. 7.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space ; 35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody ; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves : who was slain ; and all as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him : he also perished ; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be

of men, it will come to nought : 39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. 40 And to him they agreed : and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach, and preach Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. A general council erring, and that fundamentally, in matters of faith. They determined peremptorily, That the doctrine and practice of the apostles was not from God ; and accordingly resolved to suppress them, and that by death. Thence learn, That no determination of a council against a doctrine or practice is any demonstrative or sufficient proof, that such a doctrine or practice is not from God. Observe, 2. How God raised up a particular person in the council, Gamaliel, to interpose on the apostles' behalf, as Nicodemus before had done on Christ's behalf ; and uses him as an instrument to preserve them from the rage and fury of their persecutors. Without question, Gamaliel's spirit was acted and influenced by the Spirit to God, to give such counsel as is here given. Observe, 3. The counsel and advice given, in the several parts of it. 1. He advises them to take heed what they did to these men, ver. 35. implying, that men had need to take heed how they engage themselves in suppressing or destroying any sort of men whatsoever, until they have a clear and expressive warrant from heaven for their execution. 2. He assures them, That if this work be of men, it will certainly come to nought ; which he proves by a double instance, namely, Theudas, and Judas of Galilee, who both pretended to be sent of God, as saviours of their country, and gathered many followers, but miscarried in their enterprise ; intimating that every invention, contrivance, or device of man, especially in things pertaining to God and religion, will in time be blasted and blown upon by God, and come to nothing. 3. He adds, That if this work be

of God it can never be overthrown ; but the attempt will be deemed a fighting against God. Signifying to us, That for any person to attempt the suppression of any doctrine or practice that is from God, is to fight against God himself. 4. He intimates to them the great peril and danger of fighting against God, in the word *even* ; “ *Lest ye be found even fighting against God.*” Thence learn, That fighting against God is a most dangerous enterprise for any person at any time to be found engaged or concerned in. Observe, 4. The success or issue of Gamaliel’s counsel : his advice being so wise and rational, it prevailed with the rulers to desist from their former intention of putting the apostles to death ; but they come not off without blows, though without bloodshed ; they are scourged, as their Master was before them, which was both a painful and reproachful punishment ; yet were they so far from being discouraged, that they were the more resolved. They rejoiced that they were so graced as to be disgraced for Christ, and accounted it their highest honour to be dishonoured for him ; esteeming it a very great favour and happiness to bear reproach for Christ, according to that of the apostle St. Peter, 1 Epistle iv. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.* This sent them from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Observe lastly, How wisely and well the holy apostles improved their restored liberty : they redouble their pains and diligence in preaching the gospel, and are unwearied in the way of their duty, and in the work of their God. ver. 42. *Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.* That is, they laid hold on every opportunity, in season, and out of season, publicly and privately, to publish the gospel to those that had not received it, and farther to instruct those that had already received the faith of Christ. Thus the more outrageous were their adversaries, the more courageous were the holy apostles. They religiously profess the name of Christ, and resolutely abide by their profession, though they were derided, imprisoned, persecuted, and beaten for the same. Lord ! help thy ministers, at this day, to suffer reproach for thy gospel ; but never let any of them either reproach it, or be a reproach of it. *Amen.*

## CHAP. VI.

In the foregoing chapters an account is given of the two first persecutions that befell the christian church after Christ’s ascension : the former in the imprisoning, the latter in the beating, of the apostles. This and the next chapter acquaints us with a third blow given to this infant church, blacker and bloodier than both the former, in the death of the holy martyr St. Stephen ; and the occasion of it was this :

**A**ND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the world.

Here observe, 1. How the number of christians increased upon the foregoing persecution : as the Jewish church of Egypt, the more it was opposed the more it multiplied ; so the christian church here got ground by opposition : ver. 1. *In those days the number of the disciples was multiplied.* Observe, 2. How the number of believers increased, there arose (as it too often happens among a multitude) a murmuring among them : the Grecians, that is, such Jews as were dispersed abroad among the Greeks, complaining that their widows were neglected, and received less than the widows of the Hebrews, in the daily distribution of the church’s money, for charitable uses. Thence learn, That neglect of the poor, particularly of the godly poor, is a sin in all, but especially in the churches of Christ. Observe, 3. How the apostles desiring to have the poor well provided for, and not having leisure themselves personally to take care of them, advise the church to choose seven persons out of the hundred and twenty, mentioned chapter the first, to be stewards and dispensers of the church’s stock, to distribute the same with equity and indifference to all proper objects of charity without exception. Thence learn, That a general concern for the poor, and a tender

regard to their necessities and wants, is a duty that well becomes the ministers and ambassadors of God: God's poor are his treasure, his jewels, the signet upon his arm; they are always in his eye, and upon his heart; how well then doth it become the ministers of God to take care of them who are so dear to him! Observe, 4. How the apostles resolve to perform their duty to God and their people, with such zeal and application as became persons of their holy character and profession: *We will give ourselves continually unto prayer, and to the ministry of the word.* Where note, 1. That such as are called by God to the work of the ministry, ought to give themselves wholly to it: *We will give ourselves continually thereunto.* 2. That a minister's giving himself unto prayer, is as great, if not a greater duty, than giving himself to the preaching of the word: *We will give ourselves continually unto prayer, and to the ministry of the word.* To the one as the end, to the other as the mean: it is God that sets the word on work, but it is prayer that sets God on work. That minister that is not fervent in prayer, cannot expect to be successful in preaching. Pray for us, says the apostle to the Thessalonians, that the word may run and be glorified. He that begged prayer of others, did not neglect it himself, but prayed without ceasing.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch; 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly: and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Observe here, That to remove the fore-mentioned murmuring at the inequality of the poor's relief, seven deacons were chosen to assist the apostles, and to dispose of that treasure, which had been laid down at the apostles' feet, with more indifferency to all fit objects of charity without exception.

Here note, 1. The qualification of the persons chosen; *Men full of the Holy Ghost.* That is, persons that were extraordinarily assisted by the Spirit to perform the duties required of them; for the office of a deacon was, besides the taking care of the poor, to preach the gospel, and to baptize; as it appears Philip did. Had it been only to take care of the poor, they needed not to be so inquisitive to find out men full of the Holy Ghost, for that service. Here observe, That the scripture mentions a threefold fulness of the Holy Ghost, according to a threefold capacity of the receivers. There is *plenitudo Sufficientiæ*, the fulness of a vessel; this every believer hath: there is *plenitudo Abundantiæ*, the fulness of a stream: this the apostles had, when extraordinarily inspired, and filled with the Spirit, at the first plantation of the gospel: and there is *plenitudo Superabundantiæ*, the fulness of the fountain; and this Christ had, Col. i. 19. *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.* Note, 2. The manner how these deacons enter into their office: it is by prayer and imposition of hands, verse 6. *They prayed, and laid their hands on them.* This rite of laying on of hands was used anciently upon a threefold occasion in the Jewish church; namely, in their sacrifices, Exod. xxix. 15. in their blessing, Gen. xlviii. 14. and in their designation unto a charge or office, Numb. xxvii. 18. Thus Moses laid his hands on Joshua; and from hence it was derived and brought into the gospel church. When ministers were ordained by the apostles in the primitive times, they laid their hands upon them, 1 Tim. v. 22. Note, 3. The mighty success of the gospel, notwithstanding all the violent opposition that was made against it: *The word of God, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, increased, the number of believers multiplied:* yea, some of the priests themselves, though formerly bitter enemies to Christ, now embraced the faith, and were joined to the church. Great is truth, especially the Spirit of truth, and will prevail. Naked truth is too hard for armed error. Truth has the strength of God in it, and therefore human power can never prevail against divine truth: *So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.*

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue,

which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. 11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law. 14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Observe here, The great character given of St. Stephen; a man full of the grace of God, full of faith, full of power to work miracles, mighty in word and deed, able to do all things, and to suffer all things, through Christ that strengthened him. Observe, 2. The violent opposition which this good man met with in the way of his duty. He is, 1. Encountered by disputation with the heads of five colleges in Jerusalem, namely, Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Cilicians, and Asiatics. Behold here an admirable *act* kept, wherein St. Stephen was the respondent, against whom opponents appeared from all parts of the then known world; but all too few to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake. He asserted the truth so convincingly, that all his opposites had no power to oppose him. See here how faithful Christ was in fulfilling of his promise, Luke xxi. 15. *I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or oppose.* 2. His adversaries being baffled in their disputes, they burn with revenge; they hire men to accuse him falsely, that they might take away his life. The best arguments of a baffled adversary are ever found to be craft and cruelty; it has been

an old artifice of the devil, to swear innocent men out of their lives: and therefore it is next to a miracle that no greater number of innocent persons have been murdered in the world by perjury and false accusation, when so many thousands hate them, who make no conscience of false oaths. Observe, 3. The charge and accusation brought against Stephen; that he spake dishonourably of the Jewish religion, that he was continually foretelling destruction to the temple, and threatening the change of all the Mosaic rites. It is very probable, that he told them the shadows and ceremonies were to vanish, now the substance was come; and that the Mosaic rites were to give place, that a more excellent and spiritual worship might succeed. For as God was worshipped aright four hundred years before either tabernacle or temple were built, or the Jewish rites instituted; so he might again be truly worshipped after they were abolished. Observe lastly, How Almighty God by a miracle bears witness to the innocency of his holy servant St. Stephen; and to convince his accusers that he had done no wrong to Moses, God makes his face to shine now as Moses' face had shined of old, and gave him an angelical countenance, in which appeared an extraordinary lustre and radiancy: not that an angel has a face, or shines visibly; but it intimates that amazing brightness of beauty which was instamped upon the face of Stephen. He now began to border upon heaven, and had received some beams of glory approaching. It pleases God sometimes to give his children and servants some prelibations and foretastes of heaven before they step into heaven, especially holy martyrs and confessors, who love not their lives unto death; God bears an honourable respect to them that bear witness to his name and truth; and as they shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father, so will God sometimes put a lustre upon their faces here. *All the council saw St. Stephen's face, as it had been the face of an angel.*

#### CHAP. VII.

**T**HEN said the high priest, Are these things so? 2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt



in Charran, 3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. 5. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.

This chapter contains St. Stephen's apology, or defensive plea, which he makes for himself. The Jews had in the foregoing chapter accused him for blaspheming their law, and profaning their temple, imagining that Almighty God was so pleased with the temple-service and Mosaic rites, that no other way of worship could be acceptable to him. Therefore by an historical deduction, he shows them, that God was worshipped aright before either tabernacle or temple was built, or any of the Mosaic rites instituted or ordained, and consequently that the true worship of God was not necessarily and inseparably annexed to any of these things. For the proof of this, he begins at Abraham, and shows them, that he living of old at Ur of the Chaldeans, in the midst of idolaters, God was pleased of his free mercy to call him, to enlighten and draw him to own and worship the true God, and commanded him to leave his native country, and go into a land which he should show him; he promised to make of him a great nation, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. Now the design and drift of Stephen in this relation, is to prove, that Abraham from his first call in Chaldea, when he was seventy years old, to the time of his being ninety years old, had served God faithfully all that time, without either circumcision or ceremony, without tabernacle or temple; and consequently, that the true worship of God might be now performed acceptably after these ceremonies were abolished, as well as it was performed before they were instituted. Learn hence, 1. That religious worship is manifestly due to God by the law and light of nature. 2. That the

manner how that worship is to be acceptably performed, was not known by the law of nature, but discovered by divine revelation. Adam in innocence knew God was to be worshipped; yet he did not know by what outward acts he was to testify that homage, till God the sovereign Governor and supreme Lawgiver did give direction. 3. That the worship due from the creature to God the Creator is a spiritual worship, and ought to be spiritually performed. 4. The Judaical worship, though appointed by God himself, was fleshly and carnal, and never pleased God for its own sake. 5. The evangelical worship being spiritual, and most suitable to the nature of God, is therefore most acceptable and best pleasing to him. The ceremonial worship was therefore good, because God commanded it; but the evangelical worship is therefore commanded, because good. The legal worship is called *flesh* in scripture, and a carnal ordinance; in opposition to the gospel, which is called *spirit*, and a *ministration of the spirit*, because attended with a more spiritual efficacy on the hearts and lives of men.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years. 7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

Observe here, The great trial which God put Abraham's faith unto; the Lord promised to give him the land of Canaan for a possession, but he gave him not a foot's breadth. He promised to give it unto his seed when *as yet* he had no child; and when God gave him seed, yet they were to sojourn in a strange land, Egypt; and continue there in bondage four hundred years. Learn hence, That there is no grace which God delights more to exercise and try than the faith of his people; as faith puts honour upon God, so doth God put honour upon faith; and faith

never honours God more, nor is more highly honoured by him than when it is put upon the greatest exercise and trial, 1 Pet. i. 7. *That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory.* Here the apostle compares faith unto, and prefers it before gold, even the most precious gold purified in the fire. Is gold precious and rare? so is faith. Is gold pure and resplendent? so is faith. Is gold lasting and durable? so is faith. Is gold purified and improved by trying in the fire? so is faith by exercise, as the instance of Abraham here fully proves. Observe, 2. How God takes Abraham and his seed into covenant with him, and gives him circumcision, the seal of the covenant. Thence learn, That in the covenant which God made with Abraham, he gave himself to be a God to Abraham and his seed, and received Abraham and his seed to be a people unto himself. 2. That circumcision was both the sign and the seal of the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed, the people of the Jews. It is here called the covenant of circumcision, because circumcision was both the sign and the seal of that covenant made with Abraham. 1. Circumcision was a sign, and that in several respects: it was a commemorative sign of God's covenant with Abraham; it was a representative sign of Abraham's faith and obedience towards God. A demonstrative sign of original sin, and the depravity of human nature. A discriminating and distinguishing sign of the true church and people of God, from all the rest of the world. An initiating sign, by which all strangers were admitted into the Jewish church. And, lastly, it was a prefigurative sign of baptism, which succeeded in the room of circumcision in the christian church. 2. Circumcision was not only a sign, but a seal also, Rom. iv. 11. *He received the sign of circumcision, the seal of the righteousness by faith.* It was a seal on God's part to confirm all the promises made to Abraham and his seed; and it was a seal on his and their part, to bind him to renounce the service of all other gods, and to oblige them to the observation of the whole Jewish law.

9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him, 10 And de-

livered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house. 11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, 16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. 17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. 19 The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil-entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

From the history of Abraham, Stephen proceeds to that of Joseph; and shows, as he did before, that Joseph, as well as Abraham, worshipped God acceptably without either tabernacle or temple, and without such customs as Moses delivered; and, consequently, that the worship of God is not confined to an outward temple, or a Mosical ministration; and that therefore it was not blasphemy in him to say, That God might be so worshipped. This is St. Stephen's argument from the instance of Joseph. As to the particular story of Joseph, observe, 1. The great and sore afflictions which befel that holy and good man: he was envied and hated of his brethren, they conspired against him, and sought to take away his life; he is thrown into a pit, and afterwards sold for a bond-slave to the Midianites: they sell him into

Egypt, where he was imprisoned so long, till the iron entered into his soul; that is, so loaded with irons, that his flesh was eaten with them. Learn thence, That afflictions, many and great afflictions, long and sore afflictions, have been, and may be, the lot and portion of the holiest and best of men, and all these occasioned by their own brethren: *Joseph's brethren, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt.* Observe, 2. The singular support and comfort which Joseph experienced in, and under, his great afflictions: *God was with him.* God was with Joseph in Potiphar's house, and gave him favour in the eyes of his Master, who reposed an entire confidence in him. God was with Joseph in prison, and caused his imprisonment to make way for his enlargement. God was with Joseph in Pharaoh's court, and gave him a prudent and provident spirit, making him a father unto Pharaoh, and to all his people, giving him also a compassionate and merciful spirit to his brethren; pardoning their cruelties, and forgiving the injuries done unto him. Hence we learn, That all the envy, malice, and mischievous designs of men, shall never be able to hinder or disappoint the purpose and pleasure of God: *The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.* Observe, 3. The religious desire which Jacob and Joseph, and the rest of the holy patriarchs, had to be buried together in the land of Canaan, ver. 15, 16. *Jacob died, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in a sepulchre.* No doubt this was done by way of declaration of their own faith, and in order to the confirmation of the faith of others, that their posterity should enjoy and possess that land; so that this act of theirs was a profession of their faith in the promises which God had made to them of their possessing and enjoying the land of Canaan. There is a natural desire in persons to be buried by their ancestors, but here it was a religious desire; they died in the faith of their ancestors, and laid down their heads together upon the same pillow of dust, in hope of a blessed and glorious resurrection.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: 21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him

up, and nourished him for her own son. 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. 23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: 25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not. 26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? 27 But he that did his neighbour wrong, thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? 29 Then fled Moses at this saying; and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

From the history of Abraham and Joseph, St. Stephen descends to that of Moses. Where we have observable, 1. The birth and education of Moses, *he was born, and hid three months in his father's house;* and then being cast out, was taken in by Pharaoh's daughter, and has a noble education given him; being instructed in all kinds of good literature, to fit him for such great services as a prince's court might probably have brought him to. *Moses was learned.* Hence note, That the greater men are, the greater their care should be for the learned and religious education of their children; because nothing is more incongruous and unsuitable than greatness of estate and meanness of understanding. It is a shame to great men to breed up their children sensually, to gaming, sporting, and excess; as if an inheritance did serve for no other purpose, but to make the heir of it useless, and good for nothing. Again note, The latitude and extent of Moses's learning: *He was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians.* Where remark, 1. The different end which God had in his

providence, from what Pharaoh's daughter had in her particular care. She intended, by this education of Moses, the good of Egypt; but God intended the good of Israel: she designed the service of Pharaoh; but God designed Moses to be a deliverer from Pharaoh. Thus the wise and holy providence of God useth the diligence of men to effect and bring things about which they never thought of. 2. We may remark, How that Moses the great prophet, whom God spake to mouth to mouth, is here commended for his learning, yea, for Egyptian learning. Thence we may gather, That human learning is a noble and beneficial gift of God, and a very great ornament and honour unto the greatest and most excellent men: for it is in itself an ornament and perfection to the mind; it renders men the more useful and serviceable in their generation, and a greater blessing to human society, but especially to the church of God. Human learning indeed is far inferior to holiness; but in holy men, learning is a rare ornament and accession to holiness. Sanctified wit beautifies religion, sanctified reason defends it, sanctified power protects it, sanctified elocution persuades others to the love of it. So that to decry the use of human learning must proceed either from ignorance or malice, and a desire to have religion betrayed. Let us see that we get our learning seasoned with holiness, that we use it with humility, moderation, and sobriety, as an handmaid unto Christ; not vain-gloriously unto ostentation, not proudly with contempt of others, not heretically in defence of error; never suffering human learning, but divine revelation, to determine articles of faith. Then, if with Moses we be learned in all the learning of the philosophers, the more glory we shall bring to God, and be the more useful and beneficial to mankind. Observe, 2. As the education of Moses in Pharaoh's court, so the time of his continuing there; namely, till he was *forty years old*. After which God put it into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel, and offer himself to be a deliverer to them; and he supposed that they would have understood the purpose of God to save them by his hand, but they understood it not. But what reason was there for the Israelites to suppose, that Moses was the person designed by God for their deliverer? *Answer*, Very great reason; because, 1. They knew that the time of their deliverance did now draw very near. 2. From the extraordinariness

of Moses' preservation, by his being hid three months in his father's house without discovery; by his floating upon the waters in an ark of bulrushes without danger, when an infant; they might have rationally thought that such a person was designed by God for very great purposes. 3. From his readiness to defend them at this time, when an Israelite and an Egyptian contended; for it was wonderful that so great a person as Moses was, and might have been, should concern himself in a private quarrel betwixt two obscure persons. Moses might well suppose that his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would have delivered them; but they understood it not. Observe, 3. The ill treatment given to Moses, when he offered himself to be a reconciler: they thrust him from them, and expostulate with him, *Who made thee a ruler or a judge?* The meek man replies, *Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?* Where note, 1. Who are the persons doing wrong to each other; they were Israelites, both Israelites. To see an Israelite and an Egyptian struggling, had been no wonder; but to see two Israelites, who were brethren, brethren by nation, brethren by religion, brethren in tribulation, both of the seed of Abraham, both initiated into the same covenant, both in bondage to a cruel tyrant, Pharaoh, who had condemned them to an ignominious slavery, and designed such a degree of cruelty, as to murder all their male issue. This was an astonishing sight, and Moses might well say, *Why do ye wrong one to another?* Plainly implying, that both parties were to blame; but that party most, who would not hear of a reconciliation, or putting a stop to the quarrel: a reconciler is more odious than a stranger, in the apprehension of some. Observe lastly, How Moses being thus ill treated by them, departs from them, and they hear no more of him for forty years, ver. 29. *Then fled Moses, and was a stranger in the land of Madian*. Where observe, The years of Moses's life were an hundred and twenty: forty years he spent at the court in Egypt; forty years he spent in Madian with his father-in-law Jethro; and the last forty years of his life in the wilderness. Now all this time Moses was a worshipper of the true God, and that in an acceptable manner; and most of this time he worshipped God without either tabernacle or temple: from whence St. Stephen draws his argument to prove, that

as God was acceptably worshipped by holy men before either tabernacle or temple were erected, in like manner he may be so again after both tabernacle and temple are destroyed; and consequently, that they unjustly accused him of blasphemy, or speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against God.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sina an angel of the Lord, in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32 *Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. 33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place where thou standest is holy ground. 34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. 35 This Moses, whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer, by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. 36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37 This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. 38 This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sina, and with our fathers; who received the lively oracles to give unto us: 39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back

again into Egypt, 40 *Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.* 41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven: as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices, *by the space of forty years in the wilderness?* 43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. 44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. 45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; 46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. 47 But Solomon built him an house. 48 Howbeit, the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 49 *Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?* 50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

St. Stephen here goes on with the history of Moses, and having in the former verses made mention of what occurred to him in Egypt, and in Madian, here an account is given of what happened to him in the wilderness; and the first thing observable is the appearance of God to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, which burned, but was not consumed. This bush

was an emblem of the church. This bush burning, pointed out the afflicted state of the church in Egypt, having a long time been in the fiery furnace there; but the burning bush, not consumed, signified the church's preservation. God was in the midst of the bush, whilst the bush was in the midst of the burning. Where note, How almighty God, intending to send Moses as a deliverer of his people out of Egypt, gives him a visible sign for confirming of his faith, in the sight of this burning, but unconsumed, bush: 1. To assure him of his people's deliverance, that though they were now slaves in Egypt, yet they should be set free, and instated in a land flowing with milk and honey; next to satisfy him that he should be the instrument to bring to pass so glorious a work. O how gracious is God's condescension towards his servants, who is pleased by visible signs to support the weakness of their faith! *The Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire in the bush.* Observe, 2. How Moses, in the faith of God's presence with him, protection over him, and assistance of him, goes forth for Egypt, where he works many signs and wonders before Pharaoh, at last brings the people forth into the wilderness to mount Sinai, where God gave them his law, and appointed Moses then to make a tabernacle for his worship. Now the use which St. Stephen makes of this, is to convince the Jews, that for above four hundred years their fathers had worshipped God without any tabernacle at all; and, consequently, that now that sect of worship was abolished, God might be very acceptably served and worshipped in the absence of it. Observe, 3. That notwithstanding Moses was raised up by God, and sent to be a deliverer into Egypt, and a lawgiver to the Israelites in the wilderness, yet they rebelled against him, and against God in him; for they ran into the vilest idolatry, even to make and worship a golden calf, to adore the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, for deities; yea, they carried about with them the images and pictures of the heathen gods, Mars and Saturn, with the design to worship them: for which gross idolatry God sent them into captivity beyond Babylon. Hence learn, 1. That there is a strange inclination in man's heart to the sin of idolatry; the reason is, because it is a worship of our own invention. Now man is most fond of, and forward for, that service of God which is of his own finding out and setting up. We

love a devotion of our own devising very dearly. Learn, 2. That idolatry in worshipping the sun, moon, and stars, is a very ancient sin; both the old Gentiles and old Jews were guilty of it; and consequently may infer, that neither antiquity nor universality will bear us out in idolatrous worship. Example is no plea against a rule, nor antiquity against truth; it is no excuse to us, when we do evil, to say our forefathers did so before us. Learn, 3. That the idolatry of the Jews was a grand iniquity, and much worse than the idolatry of the heathens: the Gentiles knew not God, but the Jews owned him, and gloried in him. But *though they knew God, they worshipped him not as God.* Observe, 4. The Israelites being come out of Egypt by the conduct of Moses, and having entered the wilderness at God's appointment and particular direction, the tabernacle for his public worship and service is erected. That is here called, ver. 44. *The tabernacle of witness*; it being the place where God used to witness and manifest his glorious presence and because the ark of the covenant, the law, and the testimonies, were laid up in it, which were witnesses and declarations of God's will how he would be served. Now this tabernacle was an ambulatory temple, as the temple was a standing tabernacle. This tabernacle was moveable; they carried it with them from place to place, while they sojourned in the wilderness, and at last they brought it with them into Canaan, ver. 45. which tabernacle our forefathers brought in with Jesus (that is Joshua) into the possession of the Gentiles, that is, the land of Canaan, where it continued all the days of David, till Solomon began his reign, who built the temple in a most magnificent and sumptuous manner. Here note, 1. That the public worship of Almighty God is a moral duty, founded on the light of nature, and the common reason of mankind. 2. That solemn places for public worship have been from the beginning, before the giving of the law. The ancient devotion of the world delighted much in groves, Gen. xxi. 33. *Abraham planted a grove and called there on the name of the Lord.* This was a sort of oratory or chapel, whither Abraham and his family resorted, to worship the true God. After the giving of the law, while the people of the Jews were in an unsettled condition, God was contented with a mean tabernacle; but when they were settled in Canaan, then a

magnificent temple is built, in some measure suitable to the greatness and majesty of that God who was to be worshipped in it. From whence we may infer, That the public worship of God, though it doth require inward and spiritual devotion, yet, as public, is necessarily external; and as such it ought to express, in the best manner we are able, that profound reverence which we pay to the divine majesty. And therefore, that the circumstances of it should not only be decent, but very solemn and magnificent, the light of nature seems plainly to require, and the gospel doth no where gainsay. When David determined to build God an house for public worship, he resolved it should be exceedingly magnificent; which resolution was not a piece of ceremonial piety, but grounded on a moral and eternal reason, of equal force in all ages; namely, that the greatest and best of beings be most awfully adored by us in the best manner we are able; and that we declare our high regard and esteem of so glorious a Majesty by all outward fitting testimonies of respect and reverence. Observe, lastly, That after the temple was built, the worship of God was not so tied to that place, as that he could not be worshipped acceptably any where else: for God hath declared by the mouth of his holy prophet, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2, *That he delighted not in temples made with hands*, as if he were included therein, and bound thereto.

And thus St Stephen, by a large induction of particulars, made good his defence, That he was not guilty of blasphemy for affirming, that Christ would destroy the temple, and change the customs which Moses delivered. He closes his apology with this argument, That which was not blasphemy to affirm of the tabernacle, though it was set up by God's special appointment given to Moses, is not blasphemy to affirm of the temple. But it was no blasphemy to affirm the use of the tabernacle to have been temporary, and consequently alterable: therefore to affirm the same of the temple is not blasphemy; especially since the Lord hath said, *That he dwelleth not in temples made with hands*.

51 Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the prophets have not

your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

Observe here, 1. How St. Stephen, having finished his general discourse in the foregoing verses to the Jews, comes now to a particular and close application of it to them. All the while he was generally discoursing, they were quiet and still, and made no noise at all; for generals do not affect. But when he came to apply it particularly, and say, "You are the men, *ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart*," this enrages them, and drives them into the worst kind of madness. Learn hence, 1. That the efficacy of the word preached lies in a particular and close application of it to every man's conscience. 2. That it is ministers' great duty not to satisfy themselves with delivering general truth to their people, but they must point at their particular sins, (though not at their particular persons,) and reprove them for the same, what hazards soever they run, and whatever the event may be. St. Stephen's close preaching here, and impartial proving of sin, he saw would cost him his life; but nothing terrified by his adversaries, he spares not to tell them, the greatest of them, of their faults. Accordingly observe, 2. The particular sins which St. Stephen here convicts them of, and reproves them for: 1. The stoutness, and stubbornness, and stiff-neckedness, of their hearts, *Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart*; a metaphor taken from a bullock not used to the yoke, who therefore will not submit his neck to bear it. Wicked men are often called children of Belial, because they will not endure the yoke of obedience; but when God comes to put it upon their necks, they lift up their heel against him. 2. He charges them with rebelling against, and resisting of, the Holy Spirit of God, *Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*. That is, both the outward testimony of the Holy Ghost speaking to them in the ministry of the prophets and apostles, and also the inward operations of the Holy Spirit in the work of illumination and conviction which they had been under. 3. For their imitating their cruel ancestors, who killed the old prophets, and crucified the Lord of

life and glory: *As your fathers did, so do ye.* 4. For their wicked violation of the holy law of God, which was given them by the glorious ministry and proclamation of angels: *Ye received the law by the disposition of angels*; that is, the angels were *Testes*, and *Internuncii*, witnesses and messengers betwixt God and Moses in giving of the law; or Jesus Christ the angel of the covenant, who is God's messenger, and the angel that appeared to Moses in the bush. He gave the law to Moses, and by Moses to you, which law ye have notwithstanding violated, and never kept.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their teeth*. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord. 58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Observe here, 1. The Jews' angry and unreasonable resentment of the foregoing representation: though it was exact truth and matter of fact, yet were they cut to the heart; that is, they were angry even unto madness. Here was a most proper corrosive, and applied by a skilful hand; but they would not let it stick, nor endure a cure: such is the enmity of wicked hearts, that when the ministers of God reprove sin sharply, instead of receiving the message, they rage at the messenger: *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart.* Observe, 2. How they discover their rage against the holy man two ways: by their gestures, and by their actions. Their gestures made a full discovery of their enraged minds: 1. *They gnashed upon him with their teeth*; the action of damned fiends. 2. They made a great outcry with an unanimous and tumultuous rage: *They cried out with a loud voice.* 3. *They stopped their ears*, resolved to hear no

more either of his counsels or complaints. 4. *They ran upon him with one accord*, like persons combined and united together in malice and madness. 5. They cast him out of the city, not out of the synagogue only, but out of the city also. They look upon this good man, of whom the world was not worthy, as a person not fit for human society. "Lord! why should any of thy present ministers and ambassadors wonder at, or be discouraged by, the ill treatment which an unkind world now gives them; when thy blessed apostles, full of the Holy Ghost, and endued with power to work miracles, were cast out before us; as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things!" But this was not all: not only by the gestures, but by their actions, did they discover the utmost effects of their rage and malice against this holy and innocent person, for they put him to death; yea, stoned him to death; shooting a whole volley of cruelty at his naked breast: a shower of stones came down upon him, from those hands which ought to have cast the first stone at themselves; but all this did but join him the closer to Christ, the corner stone, *Et per tot lapides Petre conjungitur uni.* Learn hence, That it is not in the power of piety and religion to exempt and secure the most holy and religious person either from the attempt of popular fury, or from the stroke of a violent and bloody death: *They cast him out of the city, and stoned him.* Observe, What a blessed sight St. Stephen had of heaven, and of Jesus in heaven, to prepare and fit him for his sufferings, and to support and hold him under them, ver. 56. *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.* Blessed Jesus! what an encouragement it is to us, suffering for thee on earth, to look up stedfastly by faith unto thee in heaven, who art continually standing there to behold and observe, to strengthen and support, to receive and reward, thy suffering servants; to count every stone cast at them, and to revenge all the injuries and wrongs done unto them! Observe lastly, How these bloody persecutors manage their cruelties under a form of law, that they may appear the more specious. By the law of God, stoning was the punishment due to blaspheming; and they that witnessed against the blasphemer were by the law of God to cast the first stone at him, *Deut. xvii. 7.* Accordingly, the witnesses here put off their upper garments to fit themselves for



their bloody work; and a young man, called Saul, undertook to look to them, kept their garments for them, and consequently consented unto his death, and had a hand in stoning of him: *The witnesses laid down their garments at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.* By consenting to the sins of other men, we certainly become partakers of other men's sins.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

Observe here, 1. The holy deportment of this humble saint at his death: he prays. Learn thence, That good men should shut up their lives with prayer, and die with prayer in their mouths. Our Saviour did so: his first martyr here did so. St. Stephen imitated the death of Christ, and he imitated Christ in his death; turning from malicious men, to speak unto a merciful God in prayer: *They stoned Stephen, calling upon God.* Observe, 2. The object of his prayer, or whom St. Stephen prays to; Jesus Christ. He doth not say, "O blessed Virgin! O St. Thomas! O St. Bridget! intercede with my Saviour for me!" But he directs his supplications immediately to Christ, saying, *Lord Jesus!* From whence we may strongly infer the divinity of Christ. Prayer is an act of religious worship, and he that is the proper object of religious worship must be God: none must be the object of my prayer, but he that is the object of my faith. How shall I pray to him in whom I have not believed? Observe, 3. The subject of this prayer, or what he prays for; his soul: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;* he doth not say, *Lord Jesus save my life*, which is in so much danger of being taken away. O deliver me from the hands of my persecutors, and bring me off safe! Not a word like this; but let it go well with my soul; Lord, receive my spirit. Learn hence, That the godly man's care, living and dying, is for his soul; because this is the principal and immortal part, because this is the greatest talent that ever God put into our hands, and because the happiness and eternal welfare of the body depends upon the blessed condition of the soul: if the soul be happy, the body cannot be miserable. Observe, 4. The sweet surrender, the willing and cheerful resignation, which the good man makes of his soul into the hands of Christ: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* 1. The godly man's spirit or soul is his own,

he has not sold it to sin, nor pawned it to Satan, nor exchanged it for the world; but he has reserved it for Christ, who redeemed it for him. 2. *Receive.* Learn thence, It is the duty and disposition of a gracious person to resign up his soul willingly and cheerfully in to Christ's hands, whenever God calls for it; his soul is surrendered by him, not extorted from him. The knowledge that a good man has of Christ's love and care of his faithfulness and power, encourages him to this resignation, *Psalm xxxi. 6. Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it.* And surely he that redeemed it, will not hurt it.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!* And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

We had St. Stephen's prayer in the foregoing verse for himself; here in this verse he prays for his murderers. Where note, 1. His pious charity in forgiving his enemies and praying for them, that God would forgive them also: *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* How doth this holy martyr imitate his dying Saviour! *Luke xxiii. 34. Father, forgive them.* Note, 2. His regular charity. His charity began at home: he prays first for himself, and then for his murderers; first, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;* next, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* Where remark, That Christ prayed first for his enemies, then for himself; *Luke xxiii. 34, 36. Father, forgive them:* *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;* but St. Stephen intercedes for himself. The reason of the difference is this: Christ needed no prayer for himself, but Stephen did. We are to love our enemies as ourselves; but Christ loved his enemies above himself, and better than himself. Christ's love to his enemies was the copy and pattern, St. Stephen's but the transcript. Note, 3. His holy fervency in prayer: he cried out with a loud voice, endeavouring by the cry of his prayers to drown the noise of the stones which rattled about his ears, and to divert that shower of vengeance from them which their shower of stones upon him deservedly called for from heaven. Note, 4. The holy martyr prayed for himself standing, but for his enemies kneeling, ver. 59. He stood, when he said, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit:* but ver. 60. when he said, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,* he kneeled down and cried.

He was more importunate for his enemies, than he was for himself. How near did St. Stephen the first martyr come to his blessed master Jesus Christ, in praying for his enemies! Note, 5. The success and benefit of his prayer; God heard and answered Stephen's prayer in Paul's conversion, recorded in the ninth chapter. *Si Stephanus non orâsset, Ecclesia Paulum non habuisset*, saith one of the ancients; "Saul's conversion was owing to St. Stephen's intercession." Note, 6. The holy man's exit and happy conclusion, *He fell asleep*. Where note, 1. The thing recorded of him is his death. 2. The metaphor which his death is set out by, and clothed with, and that is *sleep*. 3. The circumstance of time when he fell asleep, namely, after he had served Christ, and suffered for him. Learn thence, That it is a blessed thing when death calls us off the stage of this world, after a life of service and suffering; *When he had so said, he fell asleep*. Happy is that christian who falls asleep with his Lord's work in his hand.

## CHAP. VIII.

The history of Saul's cruelty and conversion is next recorded; the former in this chapter, the latter in the next; the design of both is to excite us to consider, what a great change the grace of God can make in turning Sauls into Pauls; persecutors into professors; and the opposers of Christ and his truth, into faithful servants unto both.

**A**ND Saul was consenting unto his death.—

That is, St. Stephen's, mentioned in the close of the last chapter; how far he consented to his death; the text tells us, *He kept the garments of them that stoned him; they laid down their clothes at his feet*, chap. vii. 58. His hand did not throw one stone at the holy martyr's head, but his will concurred with others in that bloody act; and this denominated him guilty. Learn hence, That God chiefly inspects the heart, and if the vote be passed there, he looks upon the man as guilty, though he proceeds no farther. 'Tis easy to murder another by silent wish, or passionate desire. In all moral actions God values the will for the deed, and reckons that man an actor that is an applauder. Consent unto the sins of others, makes their guilt our own: *Saul was consenting unto his death*. It follows:

—And at that time there was a great persecution against the church

which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Observe here, 1. How the spite and cruelty of the church's adversaries was not quenched, but rather inflamed, by the blood of Stephen; from whence arose a bitter persecution against the church at Jerusalem, upon which the multitude of believers fled from thence. Persecution scatters the professors of religion; but God makes scattering the way to increasing, and what was intended for the hinderance, God overruled for the furtherance of the gospel: as God over-powers the devil, so he outwits him too. This scattering persecution at Jerusalem, which was designed to smother and suppress the gospel, did propagate and spread it more and more. Observe, 2. How God sets bounds and limits to this sharp persecution; though the believers were scattered, yet the apostles continued at Jerusalem: *They were all scattered, except the apostles*. The twelve stay there untouched in the midst of the fiery furnace of persecution, to comfort and cherish the church in that sad and doleful day, maugre the malice of angry men, and of enraged devils, and those who were scattered, carried the light of the gospel among the Gentiles. Thus out of the darkness of persecution, God bringeth forth the light of the gospel, providing at once for the safety of some by their flight, and for the calling home of others by their dispersion: *They were all scattered abroad throughout the region of Judea and Samaria*.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

Observe here, 1. Though St. Stephen was stoned to death by his bloody persecutors, yet are they not so inhuman as to deny him burial. It is a mercy to have a grave, and decent burial is a blessing. The body is the garment of the soul; we lay up this garment in the wardrobe of the grave, with assurance, that we shall put it on again (when made spiritual and incorruptible) in the morning of the resurrection and wear it to all eternity. Observe, 2. The persons described who carried Stephen to the bed of the grave: *devout men*. That is, truly religious men, men of eminent piety, and holy courage also: *Devout*

*men carried Stephen to his burial.* A noble instance of a generous and a christian courage, that they durst, among such a multitude of persecutors and furious zealots own their esteem of, and pay their last respects unto, the name and memory of the holy martyr. Observe, 3. The doleful solemnity of his funeral: *They made great lamentation over him*: and reason enough there was for it, because of the church's great loss at that time. When any of the ministers of God are snatched away by death, especially by a violent death, from the service of the church, there is just cause for great and solemn lamentation: *Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.*

3 And as for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house; and haling men and women, and committed *them* to prison.

"Bloody Saul! was it not enough for thee to see a single saint destroyed, but wilt thou seek to destroy the whole fraternity and communion of saints?" Behold the fiery zeal of this furious persecutor: he spares neither age nor sex, neither men nor women, neither young nor old, but without respect he hales them to prison. O fury, worse than inhuman! not only to draw men spitefully, but to hale women shamefully, to prison. Women in all ages have been exempted from the insults of tyranny, but not always freed from the persecutor's fury. And blessed be God for that masculine courage and constancy which the feebler sex have shown, when they have been called forth to bear their testimony for Christ. Out of weakness they have been made strong. With what wisdom and courage have they answered their examiners, convicted their accusers, confuted their opposers, kissing the stake, hugging the faggots, embracing the flame! Thus can God help the weak things of the world to confound the strong, and teach the foolish to confute the wise.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

This severe persecution at Jerusalem dispersed the whole body of the church, and scattered both members and teachers thereof, except the apostles. Some went to

Damascus, some to Samaria, some to Phoenice, Cyprus, and Antioch. But God overruled this scattering for his church's increasing; he brought good out of evil, light out of darkness, order out of confusion. It is a great and certain truth, that the holy God would suffer no sort of evil to be, did he not know how to bring some excellent good out of that evil.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing, and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city.

Observe here, 1. Amongst the dispersed who went to Samaria, Philip was one; not Philip the apostle, (for all of them remained at Jerusalem) but Philip the deacon, who was the second in order after Stephen, among the seven deacons; he comes to Samaria, and preaches there. Observe, 2. The doctrines which he preached: he preached Christ unto them: that is, christianity, or the christian religion; namely, the doctrine of Christ's incarnation, holy life and death, resurrection and ascension, together with remission of sins through faith in his name. Observe, 3. The success of Philip's doctrine at Samaria: the people with one accord embrace the gospel, *giving heed to the things which he spake.* The presence of the Holy Spirit accompanying his ministry, united his hearers' hearts, as well as ears, to attend diligently to the doctrine of Christ delivered to them. This diligent attention was a blessed preparative to the Samaritans' conversion, seeing faith comes by hearing: yea, they did not only attend to, but acquiesce in all he spake. Note thence, That were there a more reverent attention to the word, there would be more conversions by it than at this day there are. Observe, 4. The external ground and reason of Philip's success in his ministry at Samaria: the miracles which he wrought. These were undeniable evidences of the truth of what he spake, and by which he showed God's authority for what

he did and said; he healed diseases, and cast out devils, (called unclean spirits, because they delight in sin, that spiritual uncleanness of the soul,) who cried out with a loud voice, as very loath to lose their lodgings, had they not been constrained to it. The miracles which Christ and his apostles wrought were heaven's broad seal to confirm the truth of what they taught: *The people gave heed to what Philip spake, seeing the miracles which he did.* Observe, lastly, What joy and rejoicing there was among the Samaritans at their receiving and entertaining of the gospel: *There was great joy in that city, not only for the cures wrought upon their bodies, but for the doctrine of reconciliation and salvation preached to their souls.* As the gospel is in itself a message of joy and glad tidings, so it fills that soul with joy unspeakable that cordially receives and entertains it. Joy in the Holy Ghost is one of the sweet effects of the kingdom of God, that is, the gospel, Rom. xiv. 17. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

9 But there was a certain man called Simon, which before-time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

An account is here given of one of Philip's auditors at Samaria, Simon Magus by name, or Simon the Sorcerer, a vile man, the blackest Ethiopian that ever baptismal water wet or washed; notorious for sorcery, for hypocrisy, for final apostasy, and avowed impiety. Ecclesiastical history informs us of the heresies he broached, of the divine honours he assumed, of the statues and images built to him and his strumpet Helen, which lewdly companied with him: of an altar erected to him with this blasphemous inscription, *Simoni Deo Sancto*, "To Simon the Holy God;" and of his tragical end; by breaking his neck, when attempting to fly up to heaven, because the people would no longer be cheated with his impostures here below. From this example, note, 1. That into the most eminent and populous cities do often enter the

greatest and vilest impostors, the most atheistical and diabolical sorcerers; there they lurk and lodge, there they seek to set up and play their prizes. Note, 2. That the vilest impostors and worst seducers have yet many, very many followers: the silly multitude is soon deluded: *To him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest.* Note, 3. That such vile deceivers have the confidence to brag, and the deluded multitude have the weakness to believe, that they are very extraordinary persons, and can do extraordinary things. Simon gave it out himself, that he was *some great one*; and the people cry him up as the *great power of God*.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12 But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Observe here, 1. How long a time this vile sorcerer, by God's permission, and Satan's power, wrought these lying wonders among the people: *He had of a long time bewitched them with sorceries*, ver. 11. Deceivers are not always suddenly detected, and drossy hypocrites are not presently discovered; but the vizard will drop off sooner or later. Observe, 2. That where the true knowledge of God comes, and the clear light of the gospel shines, there gross impieties and impostures, there cheats and delusions, will be found out, detested, and abhorred: *When they believed Philip's preaching, they were baptized, both men and women.* Where the light shines, Satan falls as lightning; magic vanishes. This Dagon cannot stand before the ark of God: when the people of Ephesus received the gospel, they soon made a bonfire of their magic books, Acts xix. 19. Observe, 3. The success of the gospel preached by Philip: the people believed, and *were baptized, both men and women.* Mark, 1. Believed, and then baptized: these were adult or grown persons, not infants, and they were heathenish idolaters, strangers to the covenant; and therefore must believe

the gospel, and profess their faith in Christ, before their baptism. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him. Mark, 2. The persons baptized were women as well as men; *When they believed Philip, they were baptized, both men and women.* Women under the gospel are capable of the seal of the covenant as well as men. Under the law they were not; then they were circumcised in the men; now they are baptized for themselves; *They were baptized both men and women.* Observe, 4. A great and sudden change wrought in Simon himself by the preaching of Philip; *He believed also and was baptized.* Behold, the sorcerer is become a professor, a believer, a baptized person. The gospel preached may have a common operation upon a soul, where it never produced inward sanctification. All that are by the gospel proselyted, are not savingly converted. All are not good fish that are inclosed in the gospel's net; but some fish, some trash. As there will be wheat and tares in the same field, chaff and corn in the same floor; so will there be some saints and some sinners in the purest earthly church. Observe, lastly, Upon a bare profession of faith Simon Magus is baptized. Learn thence, That outward profession justly gains admission into the Christian congregation, and gives a person a right to external ordinances; *De occultis non judicat Ecclesia.* "The church's judgment is a judgment of charity, not of certainty; of the outward, not of the inward man; of the life, not of the heart. The faith of Simon Magus was no other than a temporary, historical, yea, hypocritical faith; however, Philip baptizes him upon his making profession of it. An heart-hypocrite is no hypocrite (*in foro Ecclesiæ*) in the sight of the church, though most abominable in the sight of God. Simon the unsound professor was more odious in the sight of God than Simon the sorcerer.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15. Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they

were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Observe here, 1. How the apostles at Jerusalem, hearing the glad tidings of Samaria's conversion by Philip's ministry, thought fit to send down two of the twelve to confirm the new converts in the faith, and to constitute a church there by their apostolical authority. Observe, 2. The persons whom the college of the apostles at Jerusalem thought fit to send to Samaria: Peter and John. Where note, That Peter's being deputed by the rest of the apostles to this service, is an argument that Peter had no primacy or superiority over the rest of the apostles; or, if in this employment there was any sign of primacy, John was sharer in that as well as Peter: *The apostles sent Peter and John.* Observe, 3. What the apostles Peter and John did when they came to Samaria; *They prayed and laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* Where by the Holy Ghost, is not to be understood the sanctifying graces of the Holy Ghost, which the apostles never did nor could dispense, but the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, the gift of tongues and prophecy, and a power to work miracles. These were now conferred on such persons whom the Holy Ghost directed them to lay their hands upon as persons appointed and chosen to be preachers of the gospel. Where note, That imposition or laying on of hands has been an ancient rite used by the officers of the church, in their solemn dedicating of persons to the service of God and his church.

18 And when Simon saw, that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

Here observe, 1. How infinitely mistaken this wretch was, in thinking that the

miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost could be purchased with money. 2. In supposing that the apostles had a power to dispense these gifts when, and where, and to whom, they pleased. 3. And that they could enable others to impart this also : which were all very gross conceits. From this deed of Simon's, it is called *Simony*, to seek to buy spiritual gifts or offices with money. Observe, 2. What it was that put Simon upon purchasing this power : doubtless it was covetousness and vain-glory. He hoped to make a penny of this privilege, and to render himself famous among his followers by this prerogative. Learn thence, That cunning and close hypocrites, corrupt and hypocritical professors, do seek to make a gain of godliness, and a merchandise of christianity. Simon had never bid so freely for the Holy Ghost, if he had not expected to receive as freely of others for the Holy Ghost : which he desired to buy, but not to keep ; and intended to sell, not to give. Observe, 2. How St. Peter scorns the vile motion made by Simon, and rejects it with the greatest detestation : *Thy money perish with thee*. Learn thence, That wicked (though gainful) motions, are to be scorned and refused by the godly with the greatest detestation and abhorrence. Our hearts can never rise too high in a just indignation against sin, and against all temptations unto sin. *Thy money perish with thee* ; thou and thy money perish together. Observe, 4. How plainly St. Peter deals with him : he searches him to the quick, to the heart, sounds the depths of sin ; lays open the core of his hypocrisy before his face, and tells him to his teeth that his heart was rotten and unsound : *Thy heart is not right in the sight of God*. The baptismal water had washed his outside, but his inwards were unclean. The heart is the worst part of man till it be mended, and then it is the best. Where most evil lies, there we must first begin to be good : all will be good, if the heart, which is the seat, the sink and seed-plot of all evil, be made good. The life would not be so bad, if the heart were not worse. All the obliquity of our lives proceeds from the impurity of our hearts and nature, as the muddiness of the stream from the foulness of the fountain.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness ; and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may

be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. 25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

Observe here, 1. The odious character wherewith sin in general, and hypocrisy in particular, is branded : it is bitterness and bondage ; it is the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. Learn thence, 1. That sin is an exceeding bitter thing ; it is bitter to God, it provokes him to bitter anger. It was bitter to Christ, it laid him under the bitter wrath of God ; it was bitter to the angels, it turned them out of heaven, and banished them from the presence of God evermore. It is bitter to good men, it costs them bitter repentance, and it occasions them bitter chastisements ; and it will be bitter, eternally bitter, to the wicked and impenitent world. Now the bitterness of sin is not a medicinal and wholesome bitterness, but an intoxicating and stupefying bitterness, a poisonous and a baneful bitterness. Sin's bitter draught is a baneful draught. Learn, 2. That not only bitterness, but bondage, attends the service and servants of sin. As sin is the gall of bitterness, so it is the bond of iniquity, and the bondage of sin ; is a shameful and ignominious bondage, a fruitless and unprofitable bondage, a stupefying and insensible bondage, a restless and unwearied bondage, an endless and eternal bondage. Learn, 3. That every soul before conversion is in, and under, this deplorable bondage : *Thou art in the bond of iniquity*. Observe, 2. The means prescribed and directed to, for the soul's delivery out of this deplorable bondage ; namely, repentance and prayer : *Repent of thy wickedness, and pray to God*. 1. Repent. Learn thence, That timely and sincere repentance is a special mean, prescribed and appointed by God, for the recovery of the worst of sinners out of this deplorable bondage. 2. Pray. Here note, 1. A wicked man may pray, and ought to pray. As bad as Simon Magus was, St. Peter doth not drive him to despair, but directs him to his duty : *Pray*

to God. Prayer is a part of natural worship, which we owe to God; it is the soul's motion Godward; therefore, to say a wicked man should not pray, is to say he should not turn to God. Note, 2. That all the prayer in the world, without a man's own prayer to God for pardon and remission, will be ineffectual, unavailable to salvation. Simon Magus desired the apostles to pray for him, ver. 24. But St. Peter bids him to pray for himself, as ever he hopes forgiveness with God: Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray to God. Observe, 3. The encouragement given to make use of the means prescribed; namely, a probability of forgiveness and acceptance with God: *Repent and pray, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.* Learn thence, That the vilest and worst of sinners upon their repentance, accompanied with prayer and supplication unto God, have good ground of encouragement to hope for pardon of sin and acceptance with him. Observe, 4. How St. Peter takes most notice of that, of which Simon Magus took least; and that was of the wickedness of his thoughts: *That the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.* Thence learn, That wicked and evil thoughts, lodged and entertained in the heart, ought in a special manner to be repented of, and humbled for by all that expect forgiveness with God; for sinful thoughts are radical and seminal evils; they were the root of the angels' apostasy, and of Adam's apostasy also. A world of sin may be lodged in the thoughts.

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said,

Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

Here we have recorded the remarkable conversion of the eunuch by the preaching of Philip; concerning which several circumstances are to be observed: 1. The author or instrument converting; Philip, who was commanded by the angel in a vision to go to Gaza; but not the common way, or ordinary road, but by the way of the desert, a difficult (and perhaps a dangerous) way, over mountains and through vallies. Philip knew not whither he was going: but God knew whither, and wherefore he sent him. O Philip! it was worth thy going many steps out of the way, to convert and save a soul: happy for the eunuch that thou wentest out of the way, and that he as happily met with thee. Observe, 2. The subject or person converted, 1. An Ethiopian, the most despised of all the Gentiles in the sight of the Jews. Behold! the sanctifying grace of God washing a black-moor white, and making an Ethiopian clean. 2. A nobleman, a courtier, a treasurer to the queen; yet he concerns himself with religion, and, being a proselyte, travels in his chariot as far as Jerusalem, to worship God in a solemn manner. O how will this example rise up in judgment against our great ones, who have more light but less heat; more knowledge, but less love! 3. A bookish man, one that delighted in reading, and in reading of the scriptures too, and this whilst he was riding in his chariot, to lose no time for gaining the knowledge of his duty. If our courtiers and great men read not at all in their coaches, (or if so, plays or romances only, this ignorant Ethiopian lord did better, though he knew not so much as these: *He read in his chariot the prophet Esaias.* Observe, 3. The means which God sanctified and blessed for the eunuch's conversion: it was the reading and expounding of the holy scriptures. The word of God, read and preached, is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit for sinners' illumination, conversion, and salvation; and blessed are they that hear and read the word with attention, affection, and application. Observe, 4. The wonderful modesty and humility of this great man: he thankfully accepts Philip's offer to instruct

and teach him ; some would have huffed at it as a rude affront, but he condescends to learn of one beneath him. Such as are modest and thoroughly humble are also truly docile and teachable, willing to learn knowledge, although from the mouth of an inferior : *He desired Philip to come up and sit with him.*

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer so opened he not his mouth : 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away : and who shall declare his generation ? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this ? of himself, or of some other man ? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

Observe here, 1. The particular text of holy scripture which God directed the eunuch to read in order to his conversion. It was a prophecy of Christ the promised Messiah, recorded in the 53d of Isaiah, *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb dumb before the shearer.* Pointing out the innocency, the meekness, and patience, of the Lord Jesus Christ, in and under all his satisfactory sufferings for our sins : *In the day of his humiliation*, particularly in the day of his trial and sentence : *His judgment was taken away* ; that is, the right was taken away by the unrighteous judgment of the Jewish sanhedrim, and no right or justice done him ; and who can declare sufficiently the wickedness of that generation, which cut off so innocent a person from the land of the living ?—This text, Philip informs the eunuch, was truly applicable to the Messiah, who was certainly come into the world, and both did and suffered all that was prophesied of him. Here note, How wonderfully the divine providence did work in a concurring tendency towards the eunuch's conversion. God moves his heart to read, to read the scriptures, to read this scripture which informed him of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and sends Philip out of his way to meet him, and he meets him just as he was

reading that portion of scripture which most concerned him ; he wanted to be informed concerning Christ, and Philip is at his elbow at that very juncture, to instruct him in a most fundamental truth, in order to his conversion and salvation. O the wonderful love and manifold wisdom of God, in finding out ways and methods for bringing home souls to himself ! If his providence brings not them under the means, it will bring the means to them. This eunuch wanted the ordinary means of knowledge ; but being desirous of spiritual knowledge, God steps out of the ordinary road to meet him, though an Ethiopian, commonly esteemed the meanest of mankind : and thereby shows, that as there is no respect of persons, so no difference of nations, with him ; but whoever feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. In the close, Philip preaches a gospel sermon to him, displaying Jesus Christ before him ; and by the blessing of God upon the ordinance, saving faith was effectually wrought in the eunuch's soul.

36 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water ; and the eunuch said, See, *here is water* ; what doth hinder me to be baptized ? 37 And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still ; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch ; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more : and he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus : and passing through he preached in all the cities till he came to Cesarea.

Observe here, 1. The eunuch is instructed before baptized, and he desired baptism of Philip ; it was not forced upon him by Philip against his will ; *The eunuch said, What hinders me to be baptized ?* To drive men to baptism, as they drive beasts to watering, and force christianity upon them against their wills, to send forth boot-ed apostles with javelins in their hands,



and crosses on their breasts, as the Romish church doth, to dragoon men into christianity, is the way to make hypocrites, but not proselytes; for it is not whole armies that can besiege my reason, nor cannons batter my will. It is conviction, not compulsion, that must induce assent. Observe, 2. The eunuch after instruction desired baptism: *See, here is water*, let me be baptized. As if he had said, "O Philip! as thou hast instructed me, I pray thee also baptize me. Now that I have received the benefit of thy doctrine, let me not want the comfort of the sacrament." Where the heart is truly touched by the ministry of the word, and the soul thoroughly converted unto God, there is a desire to be partaker of the sacraments. Observe, 3. The condition required of the eunuch before he was baptized, namely, a profession of his faith in the promised Messiah: *If thou believest*, thou mayest be baptized. There is a necessity of faith, to render man a meet partaker of the holy sacraments: if we come to any of the sacraments without faith, we are sure to depart without fruit. Observe, 4. The qualification of that faith which gives a right to the holy sacrament: *If thou believest with all thine heart*. Only that faith gives a right to baptism, and entitles to salvation, which is with all the heart. The eunuch believed with his whole heart, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. This gave him at once a right to baptism, and a title to heaven. Observe, 5. The manner of the administration of baptism to the eunuch: he went down into the water, and was baptized by Philip. In those hot countries it was usual so to do; and we do not oppose the lawfulness of dipping in some cases, but the necessity of dipping in all cases. In sacraments, it is not the quantity of the elements, but the significance of them, that ought to be attended to: as in circumcision, it was not the quantity of the flesh cut off; and in the Lord's supper, it is not the quantity of the bread and wine taken down; so in baptism, a few drops of water poured upon me, doth signify and seal, and convey and confirm to me a right and interest in all the benefits of my Saviour's death and resurrection, as fully as if, with Jonah, I were plunged into the main ocean. Observe, 6. What followed upon the eunuch's baptizing, and coming out of the water. 1. The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; by the ministry of an angel he was carried out of his sight, that the eunuch might be the more as-

sured of the truth of those things which were taught him by Philip's ministry; and that he was a person sent of God to direct him in the way to true happiness. 2. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing, as well he might; it was the happiest journey he ever took, to meet with Christ and conversion in his way, and heaven and salvation at his journey's end. A converted man hath great cause of rejoicing; the gospel proclaimed, much more heartily embraced, is matter of great joy. Behold the fruit of faith, joy, and rejoicing; the eunuch is instructed, believed, is baptized, and goes home rejoicing. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Observe, lastly, Philip was found at Azotus, or Ashdod, thirty-four miles from Gaza, so far had the ministry of the angels carried him, and there safely set him down. Learn, How good it is to obey God in the most difficult command. Philip had a hard and tiresome journey from Samaria to Gaza, footing it through a desert, in untrodden paths, and running as fast as the eunuch's chariot, to join himself unto it at the command of God. But now from Gaza to Azotus he has a swifter and easier passage, he rides in an angelical flying chariot. When we attend the execution of God's commands, the holy angels shall attend us, take care of us, and administer necessary help unto us; like tender nurses, they keep us safe whilst we live, and bring us home in their arms to our Father's house when we die. Blessed be God for the ministry of his holy angels.

#### CHAP. IX.

This chapter relates to us both Saul's cruelty and conversion; and acquaints us with the wonderful method which the infinitely wise God took for his church's deliverance from the fury of persecution; namely, by the conversion (not confusion) of Saul the principal persecutor; whereby the churches had rest and peace. His cruelty is recorded, ver. 1 and 2.

AND Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high-priest, 2. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Observe here, 1. The lively character of a bloody persecutor: *He breathes out threatenings and slaughter against the members of Christ.* His very breath smells of fire; threatenings and slaughter, like lightnings and thunder, proceed out of his mouth. Whilst a persecutor hath in him the breath of his own life, he breathes nothing but death against others: nothing will satisfy him but the death and destruction of the members of Jesus Christ. An indiscreet and ungovernable zeal soon degenerates into fury and madness. Observe, 2. How restless and unwearied persecutors are in the prosecution of their bloody designs and purposes. Saul was now *Inquisitor hereticæ pravitatis*; away he trots to the high-priest for a commission to bind heretics, who believed on Jesus, and opposed the traditions of the fathers; and having, as he thought, swept Jerusalem of saints, he resolved next to ransack Damascus, though it was five or six days' journey from Jerusalem. However, he spurs on; away he goes through fire and water to revenge his malice on the poor members of Jesus Christ. Learn hence, that persecutors will spare neither pime nor pains, they will stick at nothing, though never so toilsome and hazardous, so they may glut their malice, and satisfy their revenge upon the poor disciples of Jesus Christ. The high-priest needed not to hire Saul to this black work; he both offers himself, and sues for the office. No doubt the high-priest and council highly applauded his zeal and forwardness for extirpating heretics, commending the gallantry of his resolution and the bravery of his mind; and having sealed his commission, sent him away with wishes of success.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Saul was now onward of his journey to Damascus (the worst journey that ever he intended, but the best that ever he under-

took,) a journey most maliciously purposed by him, but most mercifully disposed by God. Heaven had designed him for better service, and work of another nature; and accordingly he is stopped in his way, knocked off his horse, a sudden beam of light beyond the brightness of the sun darts upon him, dazzles him, and he hears a voice saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* that is, *me, in my members.* Whatever is done against christians for any thing that Christ commandeth them, he takes it as done against himself. Such as persecute the saints for their sanctity, persecute Christ himself; and he can no more endure to see them wronged, than himself. As the honour of Christ the head redounds to the members, so the sorrows of the members are resented by the head. Christ said not thus to his murderers on earth, *Why bind ye me? why buffet ye me? why scourge ye me, and why crucify ye me?* But here, when the members suffer, he cries out from heaven, *Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Lord! thou art more tender of thy body mystical, than thou wast of thy body natural: more sensible of thy members' sufferings, than thine own. Observe, 2. The wonderful power of the heart-changing grace of God. Saul cries out, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Saul is no longer a lion, but a lamb; the wolf that hunted before for his prey, now gently couches like a sheep, hears and obeys the voice of Christ the great Shepherd; and of a persecutor of the church, becomes the great doctor of the Gentiles. Behold! the tare is become wheat; the child of wrath a chosen vessel; the prodigy of nature, the miracle of grace. Lord, who can enough admire and magnify the sovereignty and omnipotent prevalency of divine grace, which could refine and did extract very precious gold from so rough, so coarse, and so base a metal? Conversion is a work of wonder in all men, but a miracle in this man, and extraordinarily strange and instantaneously sudden; and therefore is by no means to be made the measure and standard of every man's conversion. Shall we think no man converted, unless he be struck down with a light and power immediately from heaven, and be taken with a fit of trembling, and frightened almost out of his wits? How many by the benefit of a good education, others by the blessing of God upon some affliction, and upon calm consideration, without any great terrors and amazement,

have been visibly changed and converted? The effects and fruits of conversion are very visible in all, but the manner of conversion is not alike in all. Things may be very visible in their effects, which yet are not visible in their cause. If the fruits of our conversion be visible, the certainty of it is unquestionable, and the advantage of it will be unspeakable, although we cannot tell the time when, or the manner how, the Holy Spirit wrought it in us.

6 And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Observe here, 1. How easily God can make the fiercest persecutor to quake and tremble: Saul is struck down, but it is to convert him; he trembles, but his trembling was in order to rejoicing. It was a favourable, though an affrighting stroke, which struck him down, but with design to raise him up again. Humiliation for sin, in some measure, always goes before a soul's acceptance of Christ, and subjection to him. Observe, 2. How ready and desirous a converted person is to know and do the mind and will of God: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* He is inquisitive after his duty, and desirous of the knowledge of it. We may sooner find fire without heat, than a true convert without operative grace. It is not, Lord, what wilt thou have me to say? but, What wilt thou have me to do? It is not the talking, but the walking and working person, that is the true christian. Observe, 3. God's answer to Saul's enquiry: *Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* Mark, He was going to Damascus before on the devil's errand; now God bids him go. He had better authority for his going thither now, than what he had from the high-priest before. He went before for other's destruction; he now goes for his own instruction, in order to salvation: *There it shall be told thee what thou must do.*

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

Observe here, The testimony or witnesses of Saul's conversion, to wit, the men

that journeyed with him. It is probable that he had a considerable number of officers with him, to bring both men and women that professed christianity bound to Jerusalem. These saw the light shining, and heard a confused noise like thunder; but they saw not Christ himself, as he did, nor heard the articulate voice of Christ that he heard, which spake so powerfully, so convincingly, and so convertingly, to his soul. Lord, how many are there that come under thine ordinances, who hear only (like Saul's companions) a confused noise and empty sound? They do not hear the distinct voice of Christ speaking to their hearts with a strong hand, inwardly and effectually; and so remain under the power of unbelief, in an unconverted state.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

Observe here, 1. The change of Saul's posture: *He arose from the earth.* He that fell to the earth a persecutor, rises up a saint. O free mercy, and astonishing rich grace, that the earth upon which he lay, did not open her mouth and swallow him up alive! he that had run away from God, and employed his feet in the service of the devil, is once more set upon his feet again. Observe, 2. His blindness and loss of sight: *When his eyes were opened, he saw no man.* Christ taught him, by his bodily blindness, the blindness of his soul in spiritual things, which till now he was insensible of. As Saul was, so all men naturally are, spiritually blind, before regeneration and conversion; true, he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and was a great proficient in human learning, but after his conversion he counted that knowledge no better than blindness, *Phil. iii. 7. 8.* Observe, 3. His manuduction or leading by the hand into the city: *They led him by the hand into Damascus.* Who led him? doubtless his companions that came along with him upon his bloody design from Jerusalem. Here the blind led the blind; those very hands led him to Damascus, which should have haled the saints from Damascus to Jerusalem. But, O Saul! thou hadst a better leader than all these, even Christ himself: he led thee by the

hand into the city, in order to the completing of thy conversion. Now happy Saul ! though formerly rebellious, who hast thy Saviour for a leader, thou shalt neither wander nor miscarry. Observe, 4. The duration and continuance of Saul's blindness : *He was three days without sight*. This was a long night to him, who persecuted the children of the day ; a just time for him to be in darkness, who so implacably attempted to blow out the light of the gospel ; but perhaps no less time would have been sufficient to humble him for his rage and madness against Christ and his members. Besides, there are some that think, that in these three days of his continued blindness he had that rapture into the third heaven, which is mentioned, 2 Cor. xii. 2. But however that be, doubtless in that time his mind was filled with divine contemplations ; and that glorious gospel was taught him in three days, which he taught to others all his days. Observe, 5. His abstinence from food : *He did neither eat nor drink*. He spent those three days, we may believe, in fasting and prayer, and extraordinary humiliation before God, for his former wicked life, and particularly for his violent persecution of the church of Christ : he fasted, to make him more fervent in prayer ; for fasting prepares for prayer, and gives wings to prayer.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias : and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus : for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

Observe here, 1. Though Christ converted Saul himself, yet Ananias his minister must instruct him. By Christ is grace infused, but by his ministers increased ; such an honour doth Christ put upon the ministers of the gospel, that he makes use of their endeavours ordinarily both for the production and augmentation of grace in the hearts of his people. O, the necessity and usefulness of a standing ministry ! It is a singu-

lar favour to have the mind of God made known to us by men like ourselves ; and behold the honour that God puts upon the ministers, in using them as conduit pipes, for conveying the water of life to us, which he is not pleased to communicate immediately from himself ! Observe, 2. What an exact knowledge the Lord has of particular persons and particular places : he tells Ananias in what city Saul was, in Damascus ; in what street he was, in the street called *Straight* ; in whose house he was, in the house of Judas. It is matter of consolation, yea of highest consolation to the children of God, to know and remember that God knows them, that God knows their persons, knows their purposes, knows their performances, knows their place of abode ; that he knows who they are, what they do, and where they dwell. It assures them as to their persons, that they shall be accepted ; as to their performances, that they shall be rewarded ; as to their habitations, that they shall be loved, blessed, and protected by him. So dear are the holy servants of God unto him, that he loves the very streets in which they lodge, the house in which they dwell ; the walls of their habitation are always before him, and he delights continually to look upon them. Let 'holiness to the Lord' then be always written in fair and legible characters upon the walls of our houses, Zech. xiv. 10. Observe, 3. The course which Almighty God takes to remove all fear from Ananias's mind, and to encourage him to go to Saul, according to the direction given him ; although he had been such a bloody persecutor, he tells him, that, *Behold, he prayeth* ; as if he had said, " Though he has been bad, he is not now what he was, he is another man ; nay, he is a new man, he is truly and thoroughly converted ; and this is the undeniable evidence and testimony of it, That whereas before he persecuted, now he prayeth : *"Behold, he prayeth."* Learn thence, That spiritual breath is a good sign of spiritual birth : none of God's children are still-born, they all come crying into the world. The duty of prayer faithfully and perseveringly performed, is a good evidence that a soul is thoroughly converted and brought home by repentance unto God : *Behold, Saul prayeth !* But did he never pray till now ? Yes, no doubt, many a time ; when he was a strict Pharisee, he prayed after a loose and customary manner ; but he never prayed so sensibly and

feelingly, so spiritually and affectionately, so fervently and perseveringly before, as he did after his conversion. His prayer before was the cry of the old, now of the new creature; before, he prayed with coldness and indifference, now, he prays with warmth and fervency, as a person in earnest for his soul's happiness and salvation; therefore, Christ brings it in with a note of attention and observation: Now, *Behold, he prayeth!*

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Observe here, 1. Ananias' reluctance and fear to go to Saul, because of his former violent persecution, and present commission; *Lord, I have heard of this man, &c.* Learn, That such as are very ready and forward for Christ's service, may, upon appearing difficulties, hang back, till they be helped over those difficulties by the helping hand of Christ. Thus it was with Ananias, *Behold, says he, here am I, Lord,* ver. 10. to show his readiness to run on any errand that Christ would send him: but when he came to understand his message, he was affrighted, and began to draw back; therefore the Lord graciously condescends to remove the stumbling-block that lay in the way of his servant's obedience. Fear not; as if Christ had said, *Go thy way*; he is not what he was, he is another man; yea, he is a new man." Observe, 2. The honourable title which Christ puts upon Saul, *He is a chosen vessel*; that is, a person chosen of God to convey the divine treasure of the gospel, not only to Jews, but Gentiles also, even to the greatest and highest amongst them: *He is a chosen vessel, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings.* Where note, 1. The term of usefulness; he is a *vessel*. Now a vessel is not a natural, but an artificial instrument. No man is born, but made, a minister of the gospel. Vessels are not of

equal capacity, some are greater, others less: all ministers have not like endowments, nor are they equally fitted for the sacred employment. Again, Vessels are receptive instruments: they must take in before they can give out. What the ministers of the gospel here received of the Lord, that they deliver to their people; they give out what God gives in. Finally, Vessels are for effusion, as well as for reception; they let out, as well as take in; yea, therefore take in, that they may let out: therefore have the ministers of Christ a treasure of divine knowledge in themselves, that they may communicate and impart it to others. And it is not impaired by imparting, but, like the oil in the widow's vessel, increased by pouring out. A minister, by communicating the treasure of his knowledge, enriches others without impoverishing himself. Note, 2. The term of excellency, *He is a chosen vessel*; chosen to preach Christ, chosen to suffer for Christ; a vessel chosen to bear the divine treasure of the gospel both to Jews and Gentiles. Lord! what honour dost thou put upon thy ministers, in making them vessels of honour, fit for the Master's use and the family's service! If I may not be a vessel of gold or silver, let me be a vessel of wood or stone, so I may be a vessel unto honour, a successful instrument in thy hand, for thy glory and the church's good.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Observe here, 1. Ananias, though no apostle, no deacon, nor minister, that we read of, but an ordinary and private christian only, yet he has power to heal Saul of his blindness, and to confer the Holy Ghost, *Receive thy sight, and be filled*

*with the Holy Ghost.* If so, undoubtedly he had an extraordinary warrant, for this extraordinary work; for none but the apostles had power to confer the Holy Ghost. No ordinary person ought to undertake any part of the ministerial function, without an extraordinary call and commission. Observe, 2. The title given by Ananias to Saul: *brother Saul.* They were now brethren by faith and profession, owning the same God, united to the same Saviour, animated by the same Spirit, encouraged by the same promises, partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same glory. As the scripture speaks of brotherhood betwixt Christ and believers, *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*; so it speaks of a brotherhood betwixt believers themselves, *Love the brotherhood*; that is, the whole fraternity and society of christians, who are *Sanguine Christi conglutinati*, cemented by the blood of Christ, and united by the bond of love. Observe, 3. How this converted person, Saul, takes upon him the badge of christianity by baptism: *He arose, and was baptized.* Listing him thereby a soldier under Christ's exalted banner, and entering himself a member of that church which heretofore he had made havock of. Observe, 4. The prudent care which Saul takes of his health by giving nature its necessary refreshment: *He received meat and was strengthened.* Doubtless his body was much weakened and enfeebled, by his long journey partly, but by his consternation, fear, and grief, especially; as also by his humiliation, watchings, fasting, and prayer; it was therefore his duty to refresh nature, and strengthen himself for the service of his great Master wherever he should please to send him. Whilst we are in the body, there is a debt of care which we owe to the body: meat and drink are the supports of life, under the influence of the divine blessing; and all superstitious abstinence from food is no better than will-worship. Observe, lastly, Saul is no sooner changed himself, but he changeth his company and acquaintance. He no longer associates with the chief priests and rulers of the synagogues, but with the followers of Jesus, ver. 19. *Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.* Men, who cunningly conceal their inclinations, may yet be known by their constant companions. Saul was now a companion of them that feared God, and kept his commandments. The disciples at Damascus,

whom he came to destroy, are now become his delight: *He continued certain days with the disciples.*

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. 23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. 24 But their laying await was known of Saul, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall, in a basket.

Here we have an account of St. Paul's entrance upon his ministerial office in preaching the gospel: *Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues.* Where note, 1. The time of his preaching, *straightway*; he fell presently to his Master's work, not consulting flesh and blood about the difficulties and dangers that might attend it; but performs his duty with such zeal and immediate application, as became a person of his holy character and profession. Note, 2. The place which he preached: *in the Jewish synagogues.* He was afterwards indeed the apostle of the Gentiles, but, according to Christ's command, he first preached the word of life to the Jews, to convert some, and to leave others without excuse; after which he turned from them unto the Gentiles, according to Acts xiii. 46. *It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you: but because you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* Note, 3. The doctrine he preached: *That Jesus was the Son of God*, the true, promised, and expected Messiah; and that all the prophecies and predictions of the prophets concerning the Messiah, were exactly fulfilled in his person. Note, 4. The effect of his preaching: 1.

Some of his auditors were amazed, admiring that so pestilent a persecutor was become a powerful preacher : *These glorified God in him.* 2. Others were confuted, yea, confounded, being unable to withstand the force and dint of his argument, by which he proved, that this is the very Christ. Note, 5. The hazard which the apostle ran in preaching the gospel at Damascus: his enemies, who were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, took counsel to kill him, and in order to it, watched the gates of the city day and night, there being in their apprehensions no possibility of his escaping. Note, 6. The manner and means of his deliverance: some christians who dwelt at Damascus let him down in a basket by the wall, and so he escaped the hands of his bloody enemies. The wisdom of God is never at a loss to find out ways and means, either ordinary or extraordinary, for the deliverances of his servants, when their deliverance makes most for his own glory, and the gospel's advantage. God had much work for Paul to do; and till he had finished his work, his enemies could not take him off with all their combined power and malice.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them, how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them, coming in and going out, at Jerusalem. 29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

Here we have an account of the second place which Paul exercised his ministry in, namely, Jerusalem. Having escaped with life at Damascus, he comes to Jerusalem, and attempts to join himself to the disciples there, who were all afraid of him, knowing how bloody a persecutor he had been.

The conversion of a persecutor is so rare and seldom heard of, that it puts the largest charity hard to it, to believe the verity and reality of such a person's conversion unto God. The disciples, who had formerly felt the effects of Saul's persecuting rage and fury, might justly be afraid of taking him into intimate fellowship and communion with the church. Observe next, How Barnabas was stirred up by the Spirit of God to present Saul to the church, and free their minds of all fears and jealousies which they had entertained concerning him; and this he doth by a threefold argument: 1. Because he had seen Jesus Christ in the way, as he went to persecute the saints at Damascus. 2. Because the Lord had spoken to him with a strong hand, and wrought a mighty change in him, and upon him; the persecutor being now become a great professor. 3. Because he was not only become a professor, but a preacher of that gospel he had persecuted, and this boldly and publicly, both at Damascus and in Arabia: proving undeniably that Jesus was the Christ, and the true Messiah. This testimony of Barnabas was full and satisfactory, both to the church at Jerusalem, and also to Peter, James, and John, who gave Paul the right hand of fellowship, and he went with them to the work. Observe, lastly, How the enemies of the gospel conspire against Paul's life here at Jerusalem, as they did before at Damascus, for preaching Christ, and disputing with the Grecians in defence of the gospel of Christ: they lay siege for his life. Learn thence, That always opposition, and often persecution, is the evil ghost that haunts the preachers and preaching of the gospel wherever it goes. To preach the word convincingly, brings the ill will of an evil world infallibly upon the head of the preacher.

But why did these men rather seek to kill Paul than Peter, James, or Barnabas? Answer, Because he was formerly one of their own, of their own company, of their own college; a persecutor like themselves, and a persecutor with themselves. This enraged them; they looked not upon him as an apostle, but as an apostate; one that had revolted from them, a renegade, and as such they meditate his destruction night and day: insomuch, that it is probable that never were so many sufferings heaped upon the head of any minister of the gospel throughout the world as upon St. Paul, (see them reckoned up, 2 Cor. xi. 23, &c.) partly through the ha-

ted of the Jews, and partly through the fury of the blind Gentiles; yet the Lord delivered him out of all. Till his work was done, and his race run, and he had finished the course of his ministry, neither the malice of men, nor the rage of devils, could take him off. Blessed be God, our times are in his hands, not in our enemies', not yet in our own.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

That is, "After Saul's miraculous conversion, and after he was sent away, and departed from those parts, where the Jews, his old companions in persecution, could not endure his presence, he having been just before as zealous a persecutor as themselves. Then the churches planted by Philip and others throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, had much rest and peace, and were greatly edified in knowledge and faith, in holiness and love; and the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit daily increasing in them, the number of believers daily multiplied." Learn thence, That after the persecution and wearisome troubles of the church, God has his times for their peace and rest. God sends his church sun-shine after showers, a calm after a storm, health after an hectic; and a Canaan's rest after a wilderness' journey. Learn, 2. That it is the church's duty to improve her peace and rest for her spiritual edifying; that is, for her settlement and growth, for her establishment and increase, in all the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit. Learn, 3. That it is a very great blessing to have the churches of God multiplied, and their multiplication is the happy fruit and consequent of their having peace: *Then had the churches rest, were edified and multiplied.*

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Eneas,

Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

The Holy Ghost now leaves the relation of St. Paul's life and actions for the present, and returns to give a farther account of St. Peter, what he said, what he did, and what he suffered, particularly at Lydda, at Joppa, and Cesarea. At Lydda, he healed Eneas, at Joppa he raised Dorcas, and at Cesarea he preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Observe, 1. What this great apostle St. Peter did at Lydda: he there *in the name*, that is, by the power of Christ, healed Eneas, who lay sick of the palsy, and had kept his bed eight years. Where note, The difficulty of the cure, the manner of the cure, and the effects of the cure. Note, 1. The difficulty of the cure: the disease was a dead palsy, which had taken away the use of his limbs, and made him bed-rid for eight years. All this is recorded, to show the difficulty of the cure, and the greatness of the miracle: *Omnipotent Medico nullus insanabilis occurrit morbus*: "To such an almighty physician as the great God is, no disease is found incurable." Note, 2. The manner of the cure: St. Peter acts in Christ's name, not his own; and lets the lame man know whom he should own for his benefactor, Christ himself. The apostle was but the instrument in Christ's hand: and that the cure was perfectly miraculous, appears by this; the cripple was cured immediately, and cured perfectly; it was a present cure, ver. 34. *And he arose immediately.* The instantaneous manner of the cure shows it to be miraculous, and by a divine power; for nature and art act in time and by degrees, bringing nothing to perfection on a sudden; whereas this cure was wrought in a moment, his strength is restored in an instant. It was also a perfect cure, and as an evidence of it he takes up his bed; this was to show that he was fully recovered. Note, 3. The effects of this cure: it had such an influence upon the spectators of this miracle: that *all that dwell at Lydda and Saron, when they saw it, turned to the Lord*, ver. 35. That is, they embraced the faith, seeing the cripple so strangely, so suddenly, and so perfectly cured.

36 Now there was at Joppa a



certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made whilst she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed, and turning *him* to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up: and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. 43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

This chapter concludes with a relation of the second miracle wrought by St. Peter at Joppa, in raising dead Dorcas to life. Where note, 1. The person upon whom this miracle was wrought: Dorcas, a woman rich in good works, full of alms-deeds; yet neither her piety towards God, nor her liberality to the poor, could preserve her either from death or from diseases. A dear disciple may be diseased, and die: *Behold he, whom thou lovest, is sick*, John xi. 3. yea, and dead too. Strength of grace, and dearneſs of respect, even from Christ himself, cannot prevail against diseases. Good Dorcas here lies dead, with her body washed, not only to fit her for burial, but especially to show their hope of the resurrection. Note, 2. The doleful lamenta-

tion made by the widows for the loss of this good woman, who used to clothe the naked with the labour of her hands. She did not spend her time in making rich apparel for herself, but in making garments for the poor; and it seems she had good store of them ready made by her for the poor's use, as their necessities did require: *They shewed the coats and garments which Dorcas had made*; the undoubted tokens and evidences of her pious charity. Learn thence, That the best relics of saints that can remain in honour of them when departed, are acts of piety towards God, and of charity to the poor. Note, 3. The manner of St. Peter's working this miracle: 1. He puts them all out of the room where the dead lay; partly to prevent ostentation and vain-glory, partly to prevent disturbance by their immoderate mourning, and partly to prevent interruption in the exercise of prayer, which he was now about to perform. 2. He kneeled down; which recommends to us that reverential posture in our prayers to the great God, of kneeling before him. 3. He prayed; thereby owning and acknowledging, that the power of raising her was from God, not from himself. Note, lastly, The effect of this miracle; many believed in the Lord. She was raised more for the good of others than her own; for her restoring to natural life was the occasion of raising many to a life of faith: upon the sight of this famous miracle performed by St. Peter, many believed in the Lord.

## CHAP. X.

This chapter acquaints us with the first overtures which the apostles made to preach the gospel to the Gentiles: according to Christ's command, they began at Jerusalem, and preached to the Jews throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; but now the time was come for beating down and laying flat the partition-wall betwixt Jew and Gentile, which accordingly is done in this chapter, by St. Peter's preaching to Cornelius, who was the first-fruits of the Gentiles' conversion to christianity.

**T**HERE was a certain man in Caesarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Observe here, 1. The person described to whom St. Peter is sent to preach the gospel: by his name, Cornelius; by his oc-

cupation, a soldier ; by his religion, a proselyte or converted Gentile, of which there were two sorts ; some were proselytes of the covenant, that is, such Gentiles as submitted themselves to circumcision, and the whole Mosaic *Pædagog*y. These were counted as Jews, and freely conversed with as such. Others were called proselytes of the gate ; these were not circumcised, nor did they conform to the Mosaic rites ; but were obliged only to observe the seven precepts of Noah : namely, to worship the true God and not idols ; to abstain from blood, from fornication, from robbery, to administer justice impartially, and to do as they would be done unto. Such a proselyte as this, the Jews would not converse with, but counted unclean, being a Gentile ; and such an one was this Cornelius ; but though a Gentile, though a soldier, though a commissioned officer, yet a pious, charitable, good man. In all nations, in all places, of all employments, God has a number of holy and gracious persons, to honour him in the world, according to their present measure of light received from him. Observe, 2. The evidence which Cornelius gave of his religious fearing of God : *He feared God with all his house ; he gave much alms, and prayed to God always.* Cornelius was therefore really, because relatively, religious ; he obligeth his family to fear God as well as himself, and together with himself ; like Abraham, *he commands his household after him to keep the way of the Lord*, Gen. xviii. 19. And thus the blessing of Abraham came upon this Gentile, Cornelius : *He feared God with all his house.* And his charity was as eminent as his piety : *He gave much alms to the people ;* that is, to the people of the Jews, to whom alms was not unclean, though given by an heathen person. It is further added, that *he prayed to God always* : he prayed to the true God, not to idols ; and he prayed to God always, that is, at every fitting season, and convenient opportunity for the duty. We are said in scripture to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably. Thus to pray always, to pray evermore, to pray without ceasing, is, first, to keep the heart continually as much as may be in a praying frame and disposition ; and, 2dly, to embrace the proper seasons and opportunities for prayer. The beauty of religion lies much in the harmonious performance of the duties of it ; when one duty doth not interfere with another, but we prudently find time for all. Thus did

Cornelius here : *He feared God with all his house, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.*

3 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord ? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Observe here, 1. The extraordinary favour afforded to Cornelius ; namely, the vision of an holy angel. This devout man did not seek the face of God in vain ; God sends him first an angel to comfort him, then an apostle to instruct him : *He saw in a vision an angel of God.* Observe, 2. The effect which this sight of the angel had upon Cornelius : *He was afraid.* Learn hence, That whilst our souls inhabit these mortal and sinful bodies, the appearance of angels is terrible and affrighting to them, and cannot be otherwise ; partly upon a natural, and partly upon a moral account. Upon a natural account, because the dread of spirits strikes our natural spirits, they shrink and tremble at the approach of spirits ; both the spirits of men and of beasts quake at it ; witness the ass, *Numb. xxii. 25.* that Balaam rode upon. And also upon a moral account, because of our consciousness of guilt ; wherever there is guilt, there will be a fear, upon an extraordinary appearance of God to us, though it be but mediately by an angel. Observe, 3. The joyful message which the angel brings to Cornelius : that *his prayers and his alms were come up for a memorial before God.* Where note, That as God records all the prayers of his people, so he books all the acts of mercy which any of them at any time do exercise and show unto his members ; he takes notice of the person, of the action, of the time when, of the manner how, of the measure and degree how much ; if it be but a cup of water, yea, a cup of cold water, given in love to Christ in his members, it shall not be forgotten, but recorded and rewarded.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is

by the sea side : he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

Observe here, 1. That although God sent an angel to Cornelius, to acquaint him with his will ; yet the angel was to direct him to the apostle, who was to instruct him in the faith. This, no doubt, God did to put honour upon the ministers and ministry of the gospel ; as also to let us understand and know, that we are not to expect extraordinary ways of teaching, when God affords us the use of ordinary means : *Send to Joppa, and call for Peter, he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.* Observe, 2. What an exact knowledge Almighty God has of particular persons, and particular places : he tells Cornelius, by the angel, in what town Peter was, in Joppa ; in whose house he lodged, in Simon's the tanner ; in what part of the town the house stood, by the sea-side. It is matter of consolation, yea, of great consolation, to the people of God, to know and remember that God knows them ; he knows their persons, their purposes, their performances, their places of abode ; he knows who they are, what they do, and where they dwell. So dear are the holy servants of God unto him, that he loves the very street in which they lodge, the house in which they dwell ; the walls of their habitation are continually before him, and he delights perpetually to look upon them. O let holiness to the Lord be writ in legible characters upon the walls of our houses ! *Zeck. xiv. 20.* Then will God dwell where we dwell, and the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually ; 8 And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 On the morrow as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour : 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten : but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been

a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth ; 12 Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter ; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord ; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice : and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Observe here, 1. That as Cornelius had a vision from God to encourage him to send for Peter, so the apostle had likewise a vision to encourage him to go to Cornelius. In which note, 1. the time when he had this vision, it was *at the sixth hour*, or high noon ; which was one of the three hours of prayer. When we are upon our knees in prayer, then is the time for receiving gracious manifestations from God. Note, 2. The place where he had this vision when at prayer ; upon the house-top. The Jewish houses being flat-roofed, with battlements upon them, Peter went up to the house-top to pray, as a place of privacy and retirement, free from noise and distraction ; as also to take the advantage of the place for divine contemplation, and perhaps to look towards the temple, which was formerly a type of Christ. It teaches us, that fitting places, as well as fitting seasons for prayer, are to be sought out and improved by us : *Peter went up upon the house to pray.* Note, 3. The frame wherein St. Peter was as to his body, when he had this vision ; namely, exceeding hungry. God ordered it so, to fit him the more for the vision of dainty meat. O taste and see how gracious the Lord is, in sending down a dish of dainties from heaven to his hungry children, that are praying to him here on earth ! Note, 4. The manner how this vision was made to St. Peter : it was in the way of a divine rapture or ecstasy : *he fell into a trance* : his soul was as it were abstracted out of the body, and absent from it ; that is, drawn off from the perception of all earthly and sensible objects, and enabled unto a more entire attendance upon spiritual and heavenly

matters and mysteries. To be sure it made him forget his dinner, and filled him with divine consolation; a soul fed and filled with divine dainties, doth sometimes forget bodily hunger: we read no more of St. Peter's sharp hunger after this divine entertainment. Note, 5. The vision itself, or what was represented to St. Peter, first to his eye, then to his ear. To his eye first, *He saw heaven opened*, ver. 11. Teaching that although heaven had been shut to the children of men by the sin of the first Adam, yet now it was opened by the grace of the second Adam to all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. Next he saw a great vessel descending like a large sheet, with all sorts of meats in it, both clean and unclean; and he hears a voice from God, giving him a commission, though he was a Jew, to feed freely, without distinction of clean and unclean; signifying to him thereby that he might indifferently converse with Gentiles as well as Jews, and preach the gospel to one as well as the other. Note, lastly, How St. Peter's Jewish principles made him startle at this large commission, looking upon the command as unlawful and impious, ver. 14. *Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean*: But mark the divine correction: *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*. His mistake was rectified by God, who gave him by this vision a clear intimation, that the distinction of meats was now taken away, and the difference between nation and nation was now removed by the death of Christ; and, consequently, that he might go and preach the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, without scruple or doubtfulness; the partition wall betwixt Jew and Gentile being now broken down. Learn hence, That the doctrine of the conversion of the Gentiles, came first from heaven, was revealed and made known by God himself, who has graciously declared, Gal. iii. 28. *That there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus*. Thanks be to God, that the blessing of Abraham is come upon us, through Jesus Christ.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, 18 And

called, and asked, whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there: 19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

Here note, 1. How St. Peter sets himself to meditate what he had seen and heard from God: *He pondered with himself what this vision, which he had seen, should mean*. Whatever passes from God to man, either by the eye, or through the ear, ought to be the subject of our deepest meditation. We are to contemplate the excellences and perfections which are in the word and works of God with an intellectual eye, and to dwell upon them in our serious thoughts. Note, 2. The care which the Holy Spirit took to resolve satisfactorily the inward doubtings and reasonings of St. Peter's mind concerning this matter. *I have sent them*, says the Holy Spirit; *therefore arise, and go down, nothing doubting*. Where observe, both the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost: he that knows the thoughts, the doubtings and reasonings, of man's heart, as the Holy Ghost here did St. Peter's, is truly and really God; and he that commands and forbids, is really a person. So doth the Holy Spirit here: he commands St. Peter to go to Cornelius, and forbids his doubting of the lawfulness or success of his journey: *Go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them*.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek. What is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And

the morrow after they entered into Cesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. 26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me, that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore came I unto you without gain-saying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me.

Observe here, 1. The messengers whom Cornelius sent to St. Peter: two of his household servants, and a devout soldier. All soldiers are not rude; but some are religious. Behold a devout soldier under a devout captain, and two household servants whom their master's example had rendered humble and modest. Observe, 2. The just and laudable, not false and flattering character, which they gave of their Master Cornelius: *That he was a just man, one that feared God, and one of good report among all the nation of the Jews.* It is both the duty and the commendation of servants, to give to their masters due honour; and, when called to it, their deserved character. Observe, 3. How St. Peter's doubts being resolved, he disputes no farther, delays no longer, but hastens immediately to Cornelius: when once God's command is plain, we must not dispute, but despatch; we must no longer object, but obey. Observe, 4. The reverence given by Cornelius to St. Peter: *He fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.* It seems to be more than a civil reverence which he gave him; it looks as if Cornelius took him for an angel in human shape, or a person sent immediately from heaven to him, and accordingly he prostrates himself before the apostle; but St. Peter would by no means receive any undue honour or respect from him, assuring him, That he

was but a man, and God's messenger sent unto him. Whatever Peter's pretended successor challenges as his due, of reverence and homage, St. Peter himself would not suffer Cornelius to lie at his feet, much less to kiss his feet; the ambassador would not run away with the honour which belonged to the prince that sent him. Observe, 5. How St. Peter acquaints Cornelius, that that partition-wall betwixt the Jews and Gentiles, which was erected and set up by God's command, was now by the same authority pulled down and removed; and that no man is now unclean by any ceremonial uncleanness, because he is not circumcised; and consequently, that Cornelius, though of another nation, might converse with, and be conversed with, as freely as if born a Jew. Since the coming of Christ, no person or nation is legally or ceremonially unclean; but every nation, or every person, by nature morally unclean.

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing. 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon whose surname is Peter: he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner, by the sea-side; who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. 33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee: and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Observe here, 1. Cornelius relates the occasion of his sending for St. Peter, and the warrant which he had for so doing: he declares, that as he was fasting and praying in his family, he had a vision, in which an angel directed him to send for the apostle. Where note, That Cornelius doth not talk of his fasting, praying and alms-giving, by way of ostentation, to boast of himself, but only to give satisfaction to St. Peter, that he had certain advice from heaven for what he did in sending for him. Observe, 2. The readiness of Cornelius's obedience in sending for St. Peter: *Imme-*

*diately therefore I sent to thee.* Joppa from Cesarea is computed to be about forty miles; but no sooner did Cornelius receive the commandment, but without delay he put it in execution, *and sent men to Joppa.* When our call is clear, our obedience must be speedy. Observe, 3. The kind reception which Cornelius gives St. Peter: *Thou hast well done that thou art come.* He doth not only approve of the apostle's coming, but thanks him for it. Observe, 4. The preparation and readiness of Cornelius and his friends to hear and receive the word of God from St. Peter's mouth: *We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* Where note, 1. He desires the same holy doctrine, which the apostle came to preach, may be delivered to his family, his friends, and his kinsfolk, as well as himself. A good man would not go to heaven alone; but is desirous of the instruction, conversion, and salvation of others, as well as of himself; *We are all here.* Note, 2. The place of God's pure worship is the place of his special presence: *We are all here present before God.* Note, 3. The end for which they were now come into the presence of God; it was to hear what God should speak, yea, to hear all things which God should command the apostle to speak; intimating to us, that as St. Peter himself was, so all the ministers of Christ are, confined within their commission, we must only speak what God commands; neither are hearers bound to receive any thing else. Woe unto us, if when God sends us on his errand, we tell our own tale. The word is the *counsel of God*; Now it is the counsel of God only, and the whole counsel of God also, that we are to declare, and our people are to hear: *We are all present before God, to hear all things that are commanded us of God.*

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

As if the apostle had said, "I now very plainly perceive that the partition-wall is broken down, and that national prerogatives, or personal excellences, find no acceptance with God; but that any man, be he of what nation or family soever, if he

feareth God, and worketh righteousness, shall find acceptance with him." Observe here, 1. That no external qualifications, personal privileges, and prerogatives, will procure favour and acceptance with God, who neither receives nor rejects men barely for outward respects, *I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.* Observe, 2. The true character of a religious man: he is one that feareth God and worketh righteousness; that is, a strict observer of the duties of both tables, of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards man; and the phrase of *working righteousness* implies diligence, and delight, and perseverance in the ways and works of righteousness. Observe, 3. The privilege of such a religious and truly righteous man; *He is accepted with God.* Thence learn, That both the person fearing God, and his works of righteousness, are accepted with him, of any nation under heaven, of any calling, sex, or condition whatsoever: *In every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*

36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; he is Lord of all; 37 That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached: 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. 40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever

believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Observe here, 1. The antiquity of the gospel, or of the doctrine of reconciliation, by Jesus Christ: it was preached to the patriarchs, and by the prophets to the ancient Israelites: *The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ.* Thence learn, That there is but one way to salvation, namely, reconciliation with God through the blood of Christ: and this was declared to the children of Israel, as well as unto us: to them more darkly, to us more clearly. They went to heaven then the same way that believers do now, namely, by faith in the Lamb of God, who was to be slain; we by faith in him as already slain. Observe, 2. The dignifying title given to Christ: *He is Lord of all.* 1. He is Lord of all, as God together with the Father and the Holy Ghost; the absolute and supreme Lord of all the whole creation, and unto whom all creatures are subject. 2. He is Lord of all as Mediator, Lord of all men, whether Jews or Gentiles; he is Lord of his church, Lord over saints and sinners. Hypocrites and sincere christians, all are his subjects by obligation, some by voluntary consent, and by an absolute obedience unto his commands. Observe, 3. The argument by which the apostle proveth Christ to be *Lord of all*, as Mediator; namely, from his divine unction, ver. 38. *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost: and with power:* that is, endued the human nature of Christ with the fulness of the graces of his Holy Spirit, and consecrated him to the work and office of a Mediator. Observe, 4. How Christ faithfully executed this office which he was anointed to: he went about doing good all the time he was on earth, healing diseases, and casting out devils; for God was with him, in the fulness of his Deity, as he was his eternal Son; and in power, grace, and favour, as he was Man and Mediator. Here note, 1. The great work and business of our Saviour's life; it was to do good, namely, to the souls and bodies of men, to promote the temporal happiness of the one, the spiritual and eternal happiness of the other. Note, 2. Our Saviour's diligence and indefatigable industry in this work of doing good; he made it the great business and constant employment of his life: *He went about doing good;* that is, seeking out all oppor-

tunities of being useful and beneficial to mankind. Observe, 3. The evidence and testimony which the apostle produces for all that he affirmed concerning Christ: *We are witnesses of all things which he did in the land of Judea, and in Jerusalem.* Christ took the twelve apostles as it were into his family, that by their familiar converse, and constant conversation with him, they might be enabled to testify of him:— 1. Touching his death, that he was slain, and hanged on a tree; dying an ignominious and shameful, as well as a dolorous and painful, death. 2. Concerning his resurrection, that God raised him from the dead: though he was laid, he was not lost, in the dust. God would not suffer the beloved of his soul to rot in the grave, but raised him up, and showed him openly. And, 3. As to the final judgment, the apostles were commanded to preach and testify to the people, that Jesus Christ was ordained of God to be the judge both of quick and dead; that is, of all that are in their graves, and of all that shall be found alive at his coming.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost: 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Observe here, 1. What a miraculous power of the Holy Ghost did accompany St. Peter's ministry at this time, thereby giving him an assurance of the future conversion of the Gentiles, to the great wonder and astonishment of the Jews, who thought the promise of sending down the Holy Ghost belonged only to the house of Israel. Accordingly, while Peter was thus preaching to Cornelius and his friends, the Holy Ghost by his wonderful gift of tongues de-

ascended on them, though Gentiles; at which the Jews marvelled. Observe, 2. The conclusion which the apostle draws from this: forasmuch as the Gentiles were baptized with the Holy Ghost, he infers that they ought to be baptized with water: and the argument runs thus; "They that have the grace signified by, and promised in baptism, have an undoubted right to baptism, the seal of the promise: but these Gentiles have the grace signified by, and promised in baptism; they have the inward part or thing signified; why then should the outward sign be denied them? He that has the inheritance, may claim the writings, &c. the seals, belonging to the inheritance." Observe, 3. The apostle without scruple baptized these Gentile converts: *Then commanded he them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*; that is, he either baptized them himself, or gave commandment to others to do it; and though only the name of the Lord Jesus be mentioned, yet this does not imply but that they were baptized according to our Saviour's prescription, Matt. xxviii. *In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* This done, they desired him to stay some days with them, that they might be farther instructed, confirmed, and comforted by his ministry.

# CHAP. XI.

This chapter gives us an account, how the promise of the Jews and Gentiles becoming one flock, and enfolded in one church, received its accomplishment: this was performed by the ministry of St. Peter, who was the first that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles; of which he gives a satisfactory account in this chapter, to the objections made by the Jews against him for the same.

**A**ND the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

Observe here, 1. How the Jews, apprehending that Christ and his grace had been only promised and confined to themselves, the call and conversion of the Gentiles became a dreadful stumbling-block unto them, even to the believing as well as the unbelieving Jews. Hereupon observe, 2. How they contended with Peter for

eating and conversing with the Gentiles, and especially for admitting them into gospel communion without circumcision. Whereas although God forbade marriages with the Gentiles, he never forbade commerce and conversation with them. No conversation with the Gentiles, in order to the gaining of the Gentiles unto God, was ever forbidden by God; but only such as might withdraw the Jews from God, and corrupt them by idolatry.

4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, 5 I was in the city of Joppa, praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay, and eat. 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 And, behold, immediately, there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me. 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me; and we entered into the man's house: 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the



beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying. Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Observe here, 1. How far St. Peter was from pretending to a superiority over the rest of the apostles: he did by no means think himself so far above them, as to disdain to render an account of his actions to them, but with great sincerity and humility rehearsed and related the whole matter of fact, to their entire and joint satisfaction. Observe, 2. How he acquaints the apostles with the vision he had seen, in which he was commanded to make no distinction of clean and unclean; because there was no natural turpitude in any kind of meat, save only as it was prohibited by God; and that God, who having made the law about difference of meats, had now abrogated it, and made all meats clean, and free to be eaten. Observe, 3. How he gives them the interpretation of this vision, and acquaints them with the end for which this vision was designed; namely, not so much to reveal to him the lawfulness of eating all sorts of meats, as to acquaint him with his liberty and duty to converse with and preach the gospel to the Gentiles; whom he was no longer to look upon as unclean, though they were not circumcised; but as *heirs and fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*. Observe, lastly, The conclusion which St. Peter drew from the premises: "Seeing God hath made the Gentiles equal in grace with the believing Jews; seeing the Holy Ghost came down upon them in the same manner, and with the same effects, as he did upon us apostles; I could not reasonably deny them baptism, and by baptism admission into the gospel-church: for having the grace signified by baptism, they ought to have baptism, the seal of that grace; they that have the inward, are not to be denied

the outward baptism; they that were baptized with the Holy Ghost (as Cornelius and his family were) might and ought to be baptized with water, as Cornelius was; for had I denied them church-communion for want of the ceremony of circumcision, it had certainly been a downright resistance of, and disobedience against, God." Thence learn, That it is a downright opposition to the will of God, to shut them out of the church, and to debar them from the communion of it, who have received the sanctifying graces of God's Holy Spirit, but differ from us in external rites and ceremonies only.

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. 20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

Observe here, 1. That Antioch becomes the Jerusalem of the Gentile Christians; that is, the chief place whither the Gentile converts resorted; as Jerusalem, before the dispersion by persecution, was resorted to by the Jews, and made the principal seat of their residence. Observe, 2. How God overruled the persecution and dispersion occasioned by St. Stephen's death, for disseminating and scattering the gospel as far as Antioch, verse 19. *They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that*

*arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Antioch, preaching the word.* Thus has the blood of the martyrs all along been the seed of the church; and what the devil and his instruments have designed for the extirpation, God has constantly overruled for the propagation of the gospel. Observe, 3. The great success which the ministers and ministry of the gospel had at Antioch: *The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed.* By the hand of the Lord, is meant the power and assistance of the Lord, which did accompany them in dispensing of his word, and enabled them to work miracles for the confirmation of it. The hand is the organ or instrument of working in man: when it is attributed to God, it denotes his power and help; the hand of God was manifested in the miracles which they wrought, and in faith and conversion, which the sight of those miracles produced. Learn hence, That faith and conversion are wrought by the hand of the Lord; they are his work; study and endeavour is the minister's, the blessing and success is God's; when he takes the sword of the Spirit into the hand of the Spirit, then shall it work wonders. Observe, 4. How the joyful tidings of the success of the gospel at Antioch, being heard and understood by the apostles that remained at Jerusalem, they send Barnabas to confirm the new converts at Antioch in the christian faith. Learn thence, That the news of any sinner's, much more of many sinners', conversion unto God, by the preaching of the gospel, is matter of great delight and rejoicing to the ministers of Christ. Observe, 5. The holy and honourable character which the Spirit of God gives of Barnabas; *He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith; and much people were added unto the Lord.* By a good man, is meant a kind and charitable man; he having actually sold his estate, and laid it at the apostles' feet, for the benefit of the poor, as Acts v. 36, 37. informs us; and his good works accompanying his good preaching, his good life seconded his sound doctrine, was a great mean of the conversion of so many, and that much people were added to the Lord. Observe lastly, The holy exhortation which Barnabas gave these new converts at Antioch: *He exhorted them, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord;* that is, with a firm and fixed resolution of will to keep close to the profession of the truth of Christ,

whatever tribulation or distress they might meet with. Young converts need exhortation and counsel, to establish and confirm them in the faith of the gospel, and to encourage them to hold fast to Christ.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called christians first in Antioch.

Observe here, A further instance of the piety of that good man. Barnabas having a great zeal and fervent desire that the gospel might be more and more propagated, he went to Tarsus to seek out Saul, that they might join together in the work of Christ: and having found him, he brought him to Antioch, where for a whole year they instructed the church in that city, and taught much people. O how happy is it for the church of Christ, when her ministers, laying aside all private interest, do unitedly apply themselves to promote the common interest of christianity, by propagating the gospel far and near! Observe farther, How the believers, both Jews and Gentiles, were united in one common name at Antioch; the Jews had hitherto called them Nazarites and Galileans, and they called themselves *disciples, believers, brethren, and those of the church*; but now in this place, Antioch, they were first called *christians*; a very great honour conferred upon this Gentile city, which exalted her now above Jerusalem itself. At Antioch, a Gentile city, Christ set up his standard for the Gentiles, and displayed his banner, and puts his own name upon the despised Gentiles. They who before were counted dogs, and the off-scouring of all things, have now the venerable name of Christ imposed upon them: *The disciples were called christians first at Antioch.* Note lastly, That the disciples did not call themselves christians first at Antioch, much less did their enemies give them that name; but they had it by divine authority imposed upon them. God would have Christ's disciples called christians: 1. As scholars, who receive their denomination from their master; they are taught to learn of and imitate Christ, whose name they bear. 2. As the word chris-

tians signifies anointed ones, it puts them in mind of their divine unction, which they have received from the holy One, whereby they are made kings and priests unto God. We are at this day called *Reformed christians*. God grant that we may not cheat ourselves with an empty and insignificant name; but let us fill up that glorious title, and be reformed in our lives, as well as in our religion, beautifying our holy profession by an holy and becoming conversation; otherwise an unbaptized Heathen, at the great day, will not change estate with many baptized christians.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Observe here, 1. That the wisdom of God, at the first planting of the Christian church, did confer upon some of its members extraordinary gifts; as the gift of tongues, the gift of miracles, the gift of prophecy, and the like. Accordingly, at this time, certain persons who had the gift of prophecy, and did foretell things to come, being now at Antioch, by revelation from the Spirit of God, foretold that there would shortly be a great famine over all Judea, and several other parts of the world; which exactly came to pass in the reign of the emperor Claudius. Where note, That as it is God's prerogative to foreknow future things, so it is his prerogative to enable others to foretell future things. This famine was here foretold, not by judicial astrology, but by divine revelation: that God, who provided for the patriarchs, by means of Joseph's foreseeing the famine in Egypt, provided now for the christians, by Agabus's foretelling the famine which came upon Judea: *Agabus stood up, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all Judea. As*

God's omnipotence is exerted for his church's protection, so is his omniscience employed for its sustentation and preservation; yea, all his attributes are engaged for her benefit and advantage. Observe, 2. The full proof and evidence which the new converts at Antioch gave of the truth of their conversion to the christian religion; namely, their charity and alms seasonably sent to the succour and relief of their fellow-members in Christ which were in Judea. These were become very poor, by reason of the extraordinary malice and long persecution of the Jews against them. And the seasonable succour now sent them from Antioch, was a singular comfort to them, and a sweet-smelling sacrifice unto God. Observe, lastly, The wise regulation of their charity: *Every man gave according to his ability*. This is the true standard of charity: we are to give alms of such things as we have, and according to what we have.—Christian prudence must direct us in the exercise of christian charity; that must direct us in finding out fit and proper objects for our charity, that we may give most to them that have most need. Prudence must also direct us in timing of our charity, that we do not put our poor brethren off with frivolous excuses and tedious delays. And it must direct us in the measure of our charity, that it doth not exceed the bounds of our estates. Few indeed are guilty of error on that hand: but it is impossible but there may be an error in the excess, as well as in the defect, of our christian charity. To prevent both evils, let the practice of these primitive christians be a pattern for our imitation, *who determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief unto the brethren, and send it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul*.

## CHAP. XII.

St. Luke, the writer of this history, having related what success the apostles had at Antioch; he now returns to Judea, and declares what persecution the church met with at Jerusalem; where St. James was beheaded, and St. Peter imprisoned, but by an angel miraculously delivered, as this chapter informs us.

**N**OW about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands, to vex certain of the church.

Observe here, 1. Satan, the grand enemy of the church of God, never wants instruments for carrying on his persecuting designs against the church; he had many Pharisees in the Old-Testament times, bitter

oppressors of the Jewish church ; and several Herods under the New Testament, as Herod Antipas, and Herod Agrippa, who were very warm in the worst work, namely, that of persecution : *He stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church :* that is, to kill some and to imprison others. Satan's bloodhounds have such an insatiable thirst after the blood of the saints, that they can never be satiated with it, nor satisfied without it. A tyrannical persecutor is like an hydropic person ; the more he drinks, the more he thirsts.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Then were the days of unleavened bread.

Note here, 1. The person slain by the sword of Herod ; James the brother of John. We read in the gospel that he was one of the sons of Zebedee, that desired of Christ the pre-eminence to sit at his right hand in his kingdom : and now he is the first of the apostles that suffered martyrdom, who drank of Christ's cup, and was baptized with his baptism. He was called Boanerges, or a son of thunder, for his zealous and earnest preaching : no wonder then that Herod and the enraged Jews hated him, and were stirred up by Satan to destroy him. For such as are most useful to, and most eminent in, the church, are always the object of Satan's wrath and anger, and of the persecutor's rage and fury : *He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.* Observe, 2. James being slain, Peter is to follow : *He proceeded farther to take Peter also.* The rage of persecutors is not easily satisfied, and the blood which they shed is but oil to feed the flames of their revenge. But mark the overruling power and goodness of God : though St. James was murdered, St. Peter shall be but imprisoned. The husbandman doth not commit all his corn to the oven, but saves some for seed. Persecutors cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can.

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him ; intending

after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Peter being imprisoned, observe what an excess of care and caution Herod takes for securing his prisoner : sixteen soldiers are set to guard him, four at a time, and to take their turns at the four watches of the night, to relieve one another. Thence learn, That the enemies of the church make the surest work they can, when at any time God permits his servants to fall into any of their hands. Thus they dealt with the Head, when they had apprehended him ; the watch-word was, *Hold him fast.* St. Matt. xxvi. 48. When they crucified him, they nailed him fast to his cross ; when they buried him, they made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch, and thus they deal with the members ; St. Peter has guard upon guard set over him, some soldiers chained to him, and others always standing at the door to observe him. But all this care, concern, and caution, to secure the prisoner, did illustrate the glory of the miracle in his wonderful deliverance.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison ; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

That is, fervent and importunate prayer was put up to God by the church on Peter's behalf : with the united strength of their whole souls they stormed heaven, and took him by force out of Herod's hand. Learn, 1. That when the church is plunged into deep perplexities, the only help she can hope for, must come unto her in the way of prayer. Learn, 2. That when God suffers any of the ministers of the church to fall under the rage of persecutors, it is the church's duty to wrestle with God by prayer in an extraordinary manner on their behalf : *Prayer was made without ceasing of the church.* Learn, 3. That when God intends to bestow any extraordinary mercy upon his church, he stirs up the hearts of his people to pray for it in a very extraordinary manner.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains : and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

Observe, Peter continued in prison till the very night before Herod intended to

bring him out to the people; and if they desired it, it is probable he intended to put him to death the next day. Learn thence, That God oft-times suffers his children to come to the pit's brink, and then delivers them, that they may be the more sensible of his mercy, and have the greater cause to magnify his power. Peter was now come to his last night; the tyrant Herod probably intended his execution next morning. Now was the time for God to step in; our extremity is his opportunity. Observe farther, That notwithstanding Peter's imminent and impending danger, he sleeps very soundly, resigning up himself into the hands of Christ, and resolving, if he may no longer live Christ's servant, that he will die his sacrifice. I question whether Herod that imprisoned him slept half so soundly. Lord! how soft and secure a pillow is a good conscience, even on the confines of death, and in the very jaws of danger! Observe lastly, That God takes most care of Peter when he was able to take least care of himself: when he was asleep, and altogether insensible of his danger, God was awake and acting effectually in order to his deliverance. Happy prisoners, who have God with them in prison! Such are prisoners of hope indeed, and shall certainly experience divine help.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

Observe here, 1. That God hath some-

times made use of the ministry of angels to effect deliverance for his people. Observe, 2. The several good offices which the angel now did for Peter, in order to his enlargement: Peter is asleep, the angel awakes him; he is laid, the angel raises him; he is amazed, the angel directs him, he is bound, the angel unties him; he knows not where he is, the angel goes before him, and guides him; he is to pass through many difficulties, the angel conducts him. Lord, how innumerable are the good offices, which at thy command the holy angels do for us! though they are not sensibly in this manner apprehended by us. What love and service do we owe to thee! what honour and respect should we pay to them, for their care over us, and attendance upon us! Observe, 3. Peter must arise, gird himself, bind on his sandals, cast his garments about him, follow the angel, and use his own endeavours in order to his own deliverance. God will have him use the means, even then when he was about to work a miracle for him. What a tempting of God is it then to neglect the means when we cannot expect miracles! As to trust to means is to neglect God, so to neglect the means is to tempt God. We must always subserve the providence of God in the use of such means as his wisdom has appointed and directed us unto. Observe lastly, That this deliverance was so amazing and surprising, that Peter thought it a dream only, ver. 9. *He wist not that it was true, but thought he had seen a vision.* Learn thence, That sometimes the deliverances of the godly from imminent and apparent dangers, are so very wonderful, and attended with such a crowd of improbabilities, that they have much ado to believe in them, though they see them with their eyes. When God turned the captivity of Peter, he was like unto them that dream, *Psal. cxxvi. 1.*

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. 12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together, praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at

the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. 14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. 15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, it is his angel. 16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. 17 But he beckoning unto them with the hand, to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And said, Go, shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Observe here, 1. The wise and holy course which the church took for the apostle's enlargement, and that was, keeping a day of prayer. A number of christians get together, and importune heaven: the enemies plot, the church prays; they shut the prison doors, the church opens heaven's doors; and God gives Peter in, as an answer of prayer, before they rose off from their knees. O how good is it to draw near to God! What a prayer-hearing God is our God! How great is the power and prevalency of the conjoined prayers of good men! God's praying people ever have been, and will be, a prevailing people. Whilst these pious souls were in the very act of calling upon God for Peter's release, God gives in Peter released to them. God never wants means for his people's deliverance, when he is once set on work by the prayers of his people. Observe, 2. St. Peter being delivered, meditates whilst he was walking in the streets, and going along by himself, on the greatness of his danger, and the graciousness of his deliverance. Holy and suitable thoughts, pious meditations and ejaculations, do well become us in any place, at all times, and upon all occasions; but especially after signal deliverances from signal dangers. We can never enough ruminate upon them, or be sufficiently thankful for them. Observe, 3. The wisdom and goodness of the Divine Providence in directing Peter in the dead of the night to the house where the

saints were praying for him. This is the more remarkable, because the angel having done his work which God sent him upon, after he had delivered Peter from his chains and imprisonment, he left him to shift for himself, and to take care of his own safety; but though an angel left him, yet the providence of God conducted him to a place where he was both safe and welcome. Observe, 4. What an ancient opinion it was, that every good man had a guardian-angel appointed him by God, to take a special care of him to his life's end; to direct him in his way, to guard him from dangers, and to deliver him in his distresses: *They say, It is his angel.* For which saying there could be no reason, had there not been a current opinion among them of guardian angels. Blessed be God, his holy angels are our keepers, our counsellors, our defenders, our loving and friendly associates; and they shall never depart from us, till they have conducted us safely to our heavenly Father's house, where we shall be as the angels of God in heaven. Observe, 5. How Peter gives God, and not the angel, the glory of his deliverance, ver. 17. *He declared how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.* The angel was but the instrument, God was the principal agent, ver. 11. *The Lord hath sent his angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod.* All deliverances must be ascribed to him, who commands deliverance for his people. Observe, 6. The prudential care which St. Peter takes for his future preservation: *He departed, and went to another place.* He could not think himself safe whilst Herod was so near, no more than a lamb could be safe near the lion's den. He knew he should be hunted for, therefore escapes for his life. And besides his own danger, he was not willing to endanger his friends, who did not entertain and harbour him; but, both for his own and their preservation, he departs to another place. Learn, That a prudential use of all lawful means for our own and others' preservation, in subserviency to divine Providence, is our duty, our wisdom, and in the least, both as men and christians.

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and command-

ed that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and *there* abode.

Observe here, 1. How wicked persecutors are mightily enraged when their bloody purposes are disappointed: Herod having lost his prize, is so incensed, that he caused the keepers first to be examined, (and possibly by torture,) and then to be put to death. Observe, 2. The justice of God, and the great injustice of Herod: it was just in God to suffer the soldiers, who were Herod's instruments in persecution, to die by the bloody hand of Herod, whose tools they were. Instruments in persecution God oft-times meets with in this world, and sometimes they fall by the hand of persecutors themselves; yet was it notorious injustice in Herod to put to death those innocent soldiers, who could not help what was done, and were no-ways accessory to the prisoners' escape.

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

Observe, Herod, upon St. Peter's escape out of his hands, leaves Jerusalem, and goes to dwell at Cesarea; where, being highly displeased with the rich citizens of Tyre and Sidon, he designs to make war upon them. But they being sensible that their cities lying upon the sea-coasts, and having little land belonging to them, they must be beholden to Judea and Galilee, which were under Herod's jurisdiction, for a great part of their provisions; therefore they prudently compound the matter with him, knowing that to fight with him who fed them, was the ready way to be famished. And opening the breasts of Blastus the king's chamberlain, with a golden key, through that passage they made their access to pacify the king. Interest leads us to pay homage to them whom our dependency is upon. Yet, though men depend upon God for all, for life, and for the comforts and supports of life, which they do enjoy; (our country being nourished by the King of heaven's country;)

yet how few by prayer do own their dependence upon him, or by praise and thanksgiving do acknowledge the hand that supplies them!

21 And upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.* 23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Upon a set day, that is, as some suppose, on his own birth-day, he was arrayed in royal apparel, in a cloak made of cloth of silver, but dyed with St. James's blood, ver. 2. which being beaten upon by the sun-beams, did greatly dazzle the eyes of all spectators, he makes an eloquent oration, more gaudy than his apparel, unto the people, who cried out in approbation thereof, *The voice of a God, and not of a man.* Herod, instead of repelling this their impious flattery, embraces and hugs their praises, as proper to himself: and thereupon an angel and worms, the best and the basest of creatures, meet in his punishment: the angel smiting him, and the worms eating him up: and no wonder that worms quickly devoured him, whom those flesh-flies had blown upon before; no wonder that he is eaten up of worms, who forgot that he was a worm! *Quest.* But why were not the people punished as well as the prince, seeing they were equally guilty of robbing God of his honour? *True,* Herod was the receiver, but they were the thieves! why then fell not the punishment on the whole multitude? *Ans.* Because more discretion is expected from a prince, than from the rabble. Besides, what in them was but a blasphemous compliment, was by his acceptance of it made a reality, and was usurped by him, and assumed to him as due to his deserts. From the whole, note, 1. That flattery, either given or taken, is a very dangerous sin, a God-provoking and a wrath-procuring sin. If we flatter men, God will not flatter us; but deal plainly, yet severely, with us. One of the ancients said, he was afraid of praise and commendation as much as of the crack of thunder. When men give much glory to

men, it is very hard for men to give that glory back again to God. Herod was so pleased and tickled with the glory which the people gave him, that he could not part with it : but by keeping that he lost his life. Note, 2. That though God bears long with many sorts of sinners, yet not with sinners of this sort ; *Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him.* Agreeably to that of Job, chap. xxxii. 22. *I know not how to give flattering titles, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.* The great God will admit of no co-rivals ; he will not suffer his glory to be given to another ; he will be a swift witness against the flatterer, as well as against the false swearer. *Mal. iii. 5.* He can destroy both flatterer and flattered with the twinkling of an eye, or with the turning of a hand ; and those that are cried up as gods to day, are as dung to-morrow.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied. 25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Observe, Herod the tyrant and persecutor being dead, the gospel prospered, and was preached up and down with great success. Persecutors by their weak endeavours to pull down the church, do build it up the stronger. The church in Egypt never grew so high as when Pharaoh laboured most to keep it low : the more he molested them, the more he multiplied them. Thus, here, after Herod's death and Peter's deliverance, the word of God grew and multiplied ; that is, the number of believers increased through the preaching of the word, as seed is multiplied by the scattering of the hand : the word preached is the seed sown in the furrows of the field. The ground was now harrowed by the hand of the persecutors, and the seed grew the better ; and the fruits of faith and obedience did by every shower of persecution more and more abound. The truth of God may for a time be oppressed, but it shall never be fully and finally suppressed : still *the word of God grew and multiplied.*

#### CHAP. XIII.

St. Luke, the writer of this history, having given us an account how the christian church was first planted among the Jews by St. Peter's ministry, in the first twelve chapters : he now applies his pen in declaring how the gospel was planted and

propagated amongst the Gentiles by St. Paul's ministry, to the end of the book. Now in this chapter we have the solemn mission of Saul and Barnabas to the ministry among the Gentiles fully related.

**N**OW there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers ; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Nig-ger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Observe here, That the city of Antioch being the first Gentile city which entertained the gospel, there were at that time several prophets and teachers in that city, to instruct the people. and to lay the foundation of a christian church amongst them ; and amongst others there was found one very eminent person named Manaen, who was of that high rank and quality, that he was brought up with Herod at court ; and, as the learned Lightfoot thinks, was converted there by the preaching of St. John the Baptist. Yet this man contemning with Moses the pleasures of the court, did think it no disparagement to him to be a teacher at Antioch. Learn thence, That God is pleased to manifest the freeness of his grace in effectually calling some of all sorts and ranks of men to the knowledge and obedience of the gospel, and to a participation of the benefit offered in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. *Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch.*

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

Observe here, How the Holy Ghost takes occasion, when the preachers of the church at Antioch were assembled together in God's presence, and about his work, to give them particular instructions and directions concerning his will and their duty. Observe farther, The solemn charge given by the Holy Ghost, to set apart Saul and Barnabas, by solemn imposition of hands, for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. This was a great work, and not to be undertaken without a special call from God ; therefore says the Holy Ghost, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I*



*have called them.* Which words prove both the Deity and Personality of the Holy Ghost ; he who calls ministers to the office, and unto whose service they are separated, is both God, and a distinct Person in the Godhead ; but this the Holy Ghost did : *Separate me Barnabas and Saul.* Here note, 1. That the work of the ministry is a separate work. Ministers must be set apart for the work of the ministry before they undertake it ; a call from God is not sufficient, without a separation by man. Note, 2. That this separation ought to be performed by the chief ministers of the church, who have authority from Christ to separate and set others apart for the work of the ministry. The Holy Ghost said to the teachers of the church at Antioch, *Separate me, &c.* Note, 3. That this solemn act and ordinance ought to be performed in a very solemn manner, by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands. Note, 4. That when thus performed, it is agreeable to the mind, and according to the institution and appointment, of the Holy Ghost ; *The Holy Ghost said, Separate, &c.* Note, lastly, Though the office of the ministry be an honourable office, yet withal it is a laborious work. Separate them for the work whereunto I have called them. It is a work that requires attendance and zealous application, both in season and out of season : praying, preaching, administering sacraments : guiding and governing the flock by private admonition, and public censure. These are weighty works, found so now by those that perform them faithfully, and will be found so at the great day by the slothful and negligent. How can that be esteemed by any a slight and inconsiderable work. unto the faithful performance whereof so great a reward is promised, and to the omission whereof so dreadful a woe is denounced ? If Satan destroy men's souls, he shall answer for them as a murderer only, not as an officer entrusted with the care of them ; but if the watchmen doth not warn, if the shepherd doth not feed, if the prophet doth not instruct, if the steward doth not provide, he shall answer not only for the souls that have miscarried, but for an office neglected, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully administered. Lord ! how unable shall we be, at the making up of our accounts, to endure the hideous outcries of distressed souls, saying, *Parentes sensimus parricidas* ; Our guides have misled

us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our stewards have defrauded us, and the following of their example has undone us.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia ; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews : and they had also John to *their* minister. 6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus : 7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man ; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation, withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, 10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness ; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Observe here, 1. The apostles Barnabas and Saul having received their commissions, set forth for their world to which they were designed ; and their first journey was from Antioch to Cyprus, an island of the Gentiles, lewd and wicked ; where Venus was worshipped, and much filthiness was committed by them in that abominable Pagan worship. Yet the free grace of God cast a look of pity and love upon simple Cyprus : the Holy Ghost directs these apostles thither, to reclaim them from sin, and reduce them to the obe-

dience of the gospel. Observe, 2. That though Saul and Barnabas were sent forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, yet they made the first tender of it to the Jews wherever they came; accordingly here in Cyprus, there being a great number of Jews, the apostles went into the synagogue, and preached to them. Christ was the minister of circumcision, who was himself sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and accordingly sent his apostles out first, to feed and gather these poor scattered sheep; these were accounted the children of the house, and the Gentiles reckoned as dogs; but when those wanton and full-fed children began to waste their meat, and cast it under their table, then did the Gentile dogs gather up their leavings; Acts xiii. 46. *It was necessary, both by virtue of Christ's command and example also, that the word of God should be first spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* Observe, 3. What an early opposition the devil made against the apostles in their preaching the gospel to the Gentiles: he feared the battering down the walls of his kingdom, and therefore stirs up his instrument Elymas the sorcerer to withstand them, and particularly to divert Sergius Paulus, who governed that island, from the faith. Where note, The character given of this vile man by the apostle, *O full of all subtilty and mischief! a child of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness.* Intimating, 1. That to be subtle to do mischief, is the genius or disposition of the devil's children. 2. That to be an opposer of good, is to be conformable to the devil: it is the height of wickedness not only to do evil, but to oppose good; to be an enemy to, and opposer of goodness, is the very character of Satan and his children. So much as any man opposes goodness, so much he has of the devil's disposition in him: *The child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness.* Observe, 4. The judgment inflicted by God on this wicked instrument of the devil, and the suitableness of the judgment inflicted on the sin committed: he wickedly shut the eyes of his understanding against the light of the gospel, and God deprives him of his bodily sight. Thus the wisdom of God doth oft-times so suit his judgment to the sins committed, that a person may even read his sin in his punishment; yet how did God temper mercy

with the judgment, inflicting blindness upon this vile wretch only for a season! even the very judgments of God are medicinal and in mercy. When God punishes, it is with a design not to ruin, but reform. Observe, lastly, What success St. Paul's ministry, together with the sight of this miracle, had upon Sergius Paulus the governor: he was thereby converted to the faith: *When he saw what was done, he believed; being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.* The word never works more kindly, than when it is received with admiration. Yet doth the word sometimes work admiration, where it doth not produce faith: many marvelled who never believed; but this governor was astonished, and believed also.

13 Now, when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. 14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day; and sat down. 15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.*

Here we have an account of another journey which Paul and Barnabas took to preach, plant, and propagate the gospel. Namely, to Perga in Pamphylia; and from thence to Antioch in Pisidia, so called, to distinguish it from the other Antioch in Syria, from whence they were sent forth, ver. 1, 2, 3. where their colleague and companion, John Mark, withdrew from them, and went no farther with them to the work. This, Paul took very ill, as he might, if he left them because of the difficulties and dangers which he saw did accompany and attend them in the planting and propagating of the gospel: for he that putteth his hand to the plough, and then draweth back, justly deserveth censure and reproof. However, such was the zeal of the two apostles, that they travel on to Antioch without their companion; where entering into one of the synagogues of the Jews on the sabbath-day, after the reading some sections in the law and the prophets, as the manner was, the rulers of the synagogue desired a word of exhortation from

them. Where note, How wonderfully God overruled the hearts of these rulers of the synagogue not only to suffer, but to desire the apostles to preach the gospel to them. Hereupon the apostle St. Paul stands up, and makes a most excellent sermon to them in the following verses. Where note, How readily the blessed apostle embraces an opportunity to preach the gospel; the rulers need not ask him twice: little importunity will serve to persuade an holy heart to undertake the work of God. The faithful ministers of Christ are forward for, as well as zealous in, their Master's work. No sooner did the rulers of the synagogue request a word of exhortation from the apostle, but immediately, though not unpreparedly, he stands up, and preaches to the people.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand, said, men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. 17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. 18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. 20 And after that, he gave *unto them* judges, about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. 23 Of this man's seed hath God, according to *his* promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: 24 When John had first preached, before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John fulfilled his course, he

said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*: But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose. 26 Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

This latter part of the chapter containeth an historical and practical sermon, preached by St. Paul at the request of the rulers of the synagogue. Where observe, 1. His prologue or preface, in which he craves their careful attention; withal intimating, That none of them would attend, but only such as truly feared God: *Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.* That is the proper character of a right attentive hearer. Observe, 2. The narrative which the apostle gives of the many divine favours, benefits, and blessings, which the Lord bestowed of old upon Israel his people; namely, his free election and choosing them before all nations; his wonderful deliverance of them out of Egypt; his great indulgence towards them for forty years in the wilderness, as a mother bears with a child's frowardness and stubbornness; and his constituting a form of government for them under the judges first, and kings afterwards, particularly Saul and David; who is described first by his conformity to the nature of God; *he was a man after his own heart.* Secondly, by his conformity to the will of God: *He shall fulfil my will.*

Having thus ended the historical part, he next begins the practical part of his discourse; and lays down this grand proposition, that Jesus is the Christ and Saviour of the world. This assertion he defends and proves, 1. From his stock and family according to the flesh, foretold by God. 2. From the testimony of John the baptist his forerunner, ver. 23, 24. *Of David's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, when John had first preached the baptism of repentance.* After this he makes a close application of the whole to them: *Men and brethren, to you is the word of this salvation sent.* Learn thence, That the gospel is the doctrine or word of salvation sent by God unto a lost world. The gospel is a message of glad tidings: the glad tidings which the gospel brings, is salvation; and the way and manner how the gospel brings salvation is threefold.—1. By way of pate-

faction and discovery: the gospel makes a discovery of salvation exclusively to any other way; no angel in heaven could have discovered it, if God had not first declared it in and by the gospel. 2. By way of tender and offer. O this joyful message of salvation is sent to every man's door! free grace falls upon its knees, and begs of every sinner to accept it. 3. By way of efficacy and power. The gospel brings with it a convincing and converting power to put men into a state of salvation, and hath also an establishing and confirming power to preserve them in that estate. Blessed be God, that to us, even to every one of us, is the word of this salvation sent. What monsters then are they who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel! They are enemies to our salvation: the only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, and the only way to faith is by the word; it cometh by hearing.

27 For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath-day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*. 28 And though they found no cause of death in *him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre. 30 But God raised him from the dead: 31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. 35 Where-

fore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Observe here, The apostle declares the ignominious death, 2. The glorious resurrection, of the Lord Jesus, whom he proves to be the true and promised Messiah.—1. For his ignominious death, *the Jews hanged him upon a tree*. The Son of God was not only put to death, but to the worst of deaths, even the death of the cross, by the wicked Jews: yet the apostle acknowledges, that neither the Jewish rulers nor people did understand him to be the Messiah, as they might have done, had they considered the predictions of the prophets; and therefore their ignorance would not excuse them; for the ignorance and heedlessness of men enjoying the means and opportunities of knowledge, will certainly bring destruction upon them. To sin blindly without knowledge, or to sin wilfully against knowledge, when we have the means of knowledge, is a damnable sin: *The rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets, have fulfilled them in condemning him*. Observe, 2. To take away the scandal of the cross, the apostle shows, that our Saviour's resurrection was as glorious, as his death was ignominious. God wiped away the reproach of the cross by raising up Christ from the grave; and declared him to be his Son with power, by the resurrection from the dead; and accordingly the apostle applies that prophecy to Christ, in Psal. ii. 7. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. As if the Father had said, "Now thou hast again recovered thy glory, and thy resurrection-day is to thee as a new birth-day." Three ways is Christ said to be begotten: 1. Of the essence of the Father before all worlds. 2. When his body was formed of the substance of the Virgin's flesh. 3. When God raised him from the dead: *This day have I begotten thee*; that is, declaratively, for he was the Son of God before, even from all eternity; but whilst he was in a suffering condition, his divinity was veiled: whereas after his resurrection, it was more apparent, and he was then declared to be the Son of God; not then made the Son of God, but then made manifest to be the Son of God, by the resurrection from the dead. Learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God antecedent to his resurrection, even from all eternity; he was

declared and manifested, but not made or constituted, the Son of God by the resurrection. Then it was that his divinity broke forth as the sun, after it had been shut up under a dark and thick cloud. Christ was the eternal Son of God: but his resurrection was a declaration and full manifestation of it to the world. Rom. i. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.*

36 For David, after he had served, his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption;

The Holy Ghost here gives a compendious account of David's life and death. Of his life, *He served his generation according to the will of God*: Of his death, *He fell asleep, and was gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption*. In the account given of David's life, note, 1. His activity and zeal for God; he served as well as reigned. This serving implies not a single or individual act, but a series and succession of good actions throughout the whole course of his life. Note, 2. The publicness of his activity; he served not himself but his own generation. Note, 3. The rule of his activity, and that was the will of God; as he served his generation, so he served God in his generation faithfully according to his will. All our serviceableness for God and our generation, must be guided and directed by the word and will of God. David served his own generation by the will of God. This is the account of his life. Observe next, The relation of his death, *He fell asleep, was gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption*. He fell asleep; death to the servants of God is as a sleep, and but a sleep. As a sleep, it gives rest and cessation from labour; and as a sleep, it gives refreshment after labour; and as they that sleep shall certainly awake, so those that sleep in Jesus shall awake in the morning of the resurrection, to see their glorified Redeemer face to face. Note, 2. No serviceableness to God in our generation can exempt from death; for David fell asleep. This is the lot of the faithful, as well as of the slothful servants. Note, 3. It is a blessed thing when we fall asleep with our work in our hands; when death meets us after a life spent in the service of Christ. David after he had served his generation, fell asleep:

it follows, he was gathered to his fathers; that is, he was buried amongst his ancestors: and saw corruption; that is, his body corrupted in the grave like other men's.

37 But he whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

That is, Jesus Christ, whom God the Father raised to life the third day; he saw a dissolution, but no corruption. Sin had no inheritance in him, therefore death could have no dominion over him; but he overcame death in his own territories, the grave. Thus the apostle draws the argument home, that the foregoing words could not be meant of David's person, but of the Messiah, whom David typified and represented.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; 41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work in which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

The apostle having proved his point, that Jesus was the true, the promised and expected Messiah, by his resurrection from the dead, he now applies it to his auditory; and tells them, That by the meritorious satisfaction and prevailing intercession of this Jesus, remission of sins is to be obtained, and deliverance from the wrath of God, from which the law of Moses could not, with all its ceremonial washings and sacrifices, cleanse and free them. Here note, The impossibility of our being justified by the law, and the certainty of our justification by faith in Christ: *By him, all that believe are justified*. Where observe, The procurer of our justification, *Christ*: the qualification of the subjects justified by him, *Them that believe*: and the extent and measure of our justification, (not from some, but from all things,) *By him all that believe are justified from all things*. Next the apostle exhorts his hearers to take heed, lest by their obstinate

rejecting and refusing this way of salvation now preached to them, they bring such a remarkable destruction upon themselves now, as God threatened to bring upon their forefathers of old. The sense is, "If ye reject this Jesus, and the way to life and salvation by him, ye shall be destroyed by the Romans, as your ancestors were by the Chaldeans." Sin is as odious to God at one time as another, and in one people as another: particularly the sin of obstinate infidelity and unbelief, is a God-provoking and a wrath-procuring sin: *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.*

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44 And the next sabbath-day came almost the whole city together, to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. 50 But the Jews stirred up the devout, and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barna-

bas, and expelled them out of their coasts. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

Observe here, 1. The apostle having ended his sermon to the Jews, the Gentile proselytes desired to hear more of this subject the next sabbath-day. Such to whom the word of God is savoury and sweet, are not soon cloyed with it, but hunger after it. Neither do they loath the heavenly manna, because it is rained down frequently about their tents. Observe, 2. The apostle readily complies with their desire; he preaches again the next sabbath, when almost the whole city came together to hear the gospel. But this angered the devil, and occasioned great envy and persecution to the apostles. Learn thence, That a crowd of hearers, but especially of young converts, is very hurtful to Satan, and doth usually stir up abundance of rage in his servants against the ministers of Christ: *When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy.* Observe, 3. The instruments Satan makes use of to carry on his fierce persecution against the apostles: *He stirred up the devout and honourable women, and chief men of the city.* Learn thence, 1. That the powerful and successful preaching of the gospel usually stirs up violent persecution against the preachers of the gospel. 2. That devout women and great men, nourished up in ignorance, are oftentimes great opposers of the truth, and instruments of persecution: *The Jews stirred up the devout women, &c.* Observe, 4. How the apostle with great boldness and courage acquaints them with their sin and danger: *Ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.* But how so? Not directly and formally, but interpretatively and practically. They thought very well of themselves, no doubt, and judged themselves worthy of eternal life, but their practice pronounced them unworthy, and gave sentence against them, whilst they acquitted themselves; for this their contempt of the grace of the gospel, did declare them unworthy of eternal life. Observe, 5. The emblematical action performed by the apostles, to signify God's rejection of this miserable people; *They shook off the dust of their feet against them.* This signified, 1. That the very earth was polluted where such refusers of the precious gospel did inhabit, and was therefore to be shaken off as a filthy thing. 2. That they were a base peo-

ple, vile as the dust; and that, as such, God had now shaken them off. 3. That the dust of the apostles' feet there left, might be as a witness against them, that the gospel had been preached to them. This action of shaking off the dust of their feet, was a dismal signification of a forsaken people. Observe, 6. With what joy and gladness the poor Gentiles entertained the glad tidings of the gospel: *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.* That is, when the Gentiles heard the good news, and understood their own interest in it, they rejoiced exceedingly; and as many as were by the Holy Spirit of God prepared and disposed to seek after eternal life, believed.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

That is, "The apostles and disciples in this city were nothing discouraged with the Jews' blasphemies, oppositions, and persecutions, but were filled with spiritual joy that they had embraced the gospel, and went on courageously in the profession of it." Learn thence, that God's grace, and the church's joy, may and doth increase under the greatest opposition and persecutions of men. Infinite wisdom and sovereign power knows how to overrule the contradiction of sinners, for glory to himself, and good to his church.

#### CHAP. XIV.

**A**ND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren.

Here we have an account of the fourth journey which Paul and Barnabas undertook in their travels, to plant and propagate the christian faith, and that was to Iconium. Where observe, 1. The unity of these two great apostles, both amongst themselves and in the work of God: *They went both together into the synagogue.* O how happy is it for the ministers of Christ to walk and work together in unity! to go hand in hand together in the service of the gospel, and with united endeavours

promote the glory of God, and the interest of souls! Observe, 2. As their unity, so their great constancy in performing their duty, notwithstanding all their persecutors' fury and obstinacy. *Though the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles against the apostles, yet they continue preaching in the synagogues.* Observe, 3. The great success with which it pleased God to crown the endeavours of the holy apostles: *a great multitude of both Jews and Gentiles believed;* and that which doth constantly attend the success of the ministry of the word, namely, the envy and opposition of wicked men: they exasperated, or made the Gentiles' minds evil-affected against the brethren.

3 Long time therefore abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Note here, 1. The manner of the apostles' preaching at Iconium: *They spake boldly:* that is, openly in the synagogues; and there with great freedom and plainness of speech asserted truth, condemned error, reproved sin, and denounced judgments against impenitent sinners; and this with a wise, but convincing boldness; with a meek, but zealous boldness; knowing, that if they had not now been bold for Christ, they could not at the great day be bold before him. That minister that is afraid to speak and plead for Christ now, will certainly be ashamed to look him in the face then. A serious thought of this, when we are going to preach, will make us shut all base fear out of the pulpit. Note, 2. The time of their preaching at Iconium; it was not a single sermon or two, *in transitu*, but *long time they abode, speaking boldly in the Lord.* A constant course of preaching is needful to root that word which one or two sermons oft leaveth loose; the end of the ministry is to build up, as well as to bring in, and this is done by our constancy in preaching, and exemplariness in holy living. Note, 3. How God honoured his word in the mouth of his ministers, confirming their doctrine by miracles: *He gave testimony by the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.* The miracles, which the apostles wrought were the

convincing cause of the credibility of the apostles' testimony.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided : and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them, 6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about : 7 And there they preached the gospel.

Observe here, 1. How upon the preaching of the gospel there follow great divisions : *The multitude was divided.* Not that the gospel is the cause of division, but the occasion only, and that by accident too. The sacred institutions and ordinances of Christ, are not to be quarrelled with, or objected against, because through man's corruption they breed differences, discords, and divisions. Observe, 2. How this division was the cause of persecution : *The city was divided, and an attempt was made to use the apostles despitefully, and to stone them.* Lord ! what ill usage have thine ambassadors met with from the first publication of the gospel ! The unkind world has treated them as if they were not fit to live, driving them from place to place, and persecuting them from city to city. But observe, 3. The prudential care which the apostles use for their own preservation : *They were ware of it, and fled to Lystra and Derbe :* according to Christ's command, *When they persecute you in one city, flee unto another.* Christ allows his ministers a liberty of flight in time of persecution, that they may preserve their lives for future service. We must not expect safety by a miracle, when we may have it in the use of means : yet probably it might not be fear, or desire to save their lives, which made the apostles flee ; but because they were unwilling to lose time there, when their ministry was obstructed, and when they saw the gospel was rejected. Accordingly they fled to Derbe and Lystra, and there preached the gospel. From whence note, How greatly persecution, by scattering, tends to the increasing of the

gospel. Thousands had never heard of Jesus Christ, if persecution had not driven the ministers of the gospel unto them. The wisdom of God well knows how to order those things which are designed for the prejudice, to tend to the furtherance, of the gospel, *Phil. i. 12.*

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked. 9 The same heard Paul speak : who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, 10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. 11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us, in the likeness of men. 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter ; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

Here we have an account of the fifth journey which the apostles Barnabas and Paul undertook in their travels to plant and propagate the christian faith ; and that was at Lystra and Derbe. Here their first work was to preach the gospel ; which done, God honoured Paul to work a glorious miracle for the confirmation of what they had preached. Where note, 1. The subject whom this miraculous cure was wrought upon : a man that was a cripple, not by accident, but by nature, *from his mother's womb*, and consequently *never had walked.* They that are lame by casualty, may possibly be relieved by art and industry : but to cure one that is born lame, nothing less is required than a divine power : such defects as are from nature, can only be relieved by the God of nature. Note, 2. What an extraordinary spirit of discerning was at some times ; and upon certain occasions, found with the apostles : St. Paul perceived that this poor cripple had faith to be healed ; that is, by that extraordinary gift of discerning spirits, which at this time the apostle had. The like had St. Peter also upon a special occasion ; (for this gift of discerning spirits, was not at all times found with the apostles,) he discerned the hypocrisy and falsehood of Ananias and Simon Magus. The gift of working mira-



cles, and the gift of discerning spirits, were for a time conferred upon the apostles, for confirming their testimony, but are long since ceased in the church; the reason of their ceasing is, the gospel being sufficiently established and confirmed. Note, 3. The reality of this miracle: it was not a lying wonder, but a real miracle: the man not only walked, but leaped for joy, to show that he was perfectly cured, and thoroughly recovered. All the works of God, especially his miraculous works, are perfect. Whom God cures, he cures effectually. Note, 4. What influence the sight of this miracle had upon the minds of the people of Lystra: they ascribe the honour of this glorious miracle to their dunghill deities, not to the true God; they pay their rent to a wrong landlord. Such was the blind superstition of these poor Pagans, that believing their gods were come down to them in the likeness of men, they called Barnabas, *Jupiter*, who was their chief god; and Paul, *Mercurius*, whom they accounted the messenger and interpreter of the gods. Lord! how blind are the principles of corrupt reason in fallen mankind! And how forcible is an evil custom and a vain conversation received by tradition from their forefathers! And how hard a matter is it to rectify such mistakes in religion, as time and general consent have rooted and riveted in the minds of men!

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. 14 *Which* when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities, unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Observe, 1. How far Paganish superstition did transport and carry these men: they come to the gates of the house where the apostles had lodged, and bring oxen with them, trimmed with garlands of flowers, according to their Heathenish rites, verily intending to offer sacrifice unto them. Learn, How forward the devil is to put honour, much honour, yea, overmuch honour, upon the ministers of Christ, when it is to contradict their doctrine, and gain advantage to himself by it. The devil laughed to see the blind superstitious Lysrians adore the apostles, and adorn them with the names of their heathen gods, hoping to make advantage thereby to himself. Observe, 2. With what indignation and disdain, detestation and abhorrence, the apostles reject this vile idolatry: telling them they were men of like passions, and in the same condition of mortality with themselves, and that their business was to turn them from their idols, which were mere vanities and nothing, compared with the living and true God, who made them and all the world. Learn hence, 1. That the worshipping of idols is the most senseless and irrational vanity that ever the devil put into the stupified heart of man. 2. That all good men hate idolatry in others, and abhor to be idolized themselves. Observe, 3. The description which the holy apostle gives of the true God, to draw the people off from worshipping idols: he styles him the living God, that made the glorious fabric of heaven and earth, the sea, and all things therein. A good God, that giveth rain, and fruitful seasons, filling his creatures' hearts with food and gladness. Intimating, 1. That whatsoever concerns the happiness and felicity of man in this life, is wholly derived from God. 2. That there is no nation nor person under heaven, to whom God exhibits not the evident tokens of his goodness: *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.* Observe, 4. The character which the apostles give of the former times, in which the heathen world lived: *In times past they were suffered to walk in their own ways.* That is, of old God suffered all nations, except the Jewish nation, to walk in their own ways: the meaning is, he did not check them in their sinful ways and courses, as he did his own people the

*Jews.* Yet we must not understand the apostle absolutely, but comparatively only; there never was any man, much less any nation, whom God suffered to go on in a course of sin without any stop. Every person, and every nation, has had the stop of the light of nature at least; but every nation has not had the stop of the light of the gospel, the stop of ordinances, the preaching of the word, the motions of the Holy Spirit; these the Jews had, but the Gentiles had not. In this sense God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; he did not give them his word, his statutes, or his judgments, to show them his ways, or to hinder them in walking in their own ways; and this was a sore judgment. To suffer either nation or person to walk without control or check, from word or rod, from ordinances or providences, in the ways of sin and wickedness, is a very dreadful and tremendous judgment: *In times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.*

19 And there came thither *certain Jews* from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead. 20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Note here, 1. The ill requital St. Paul had for his excellent discourse to these blasphemous idolaters: *They stoned him to death*, in their own apprehension. The sharpest and keenest edge of persecution is usually turned against the ministers of Christ, and falls heaviest on the prophets of God. The devil will do his utmost to take away their lives, who are continually endeavouring the destruction of him and his kingdom. Note, 2. The great inconsistency and incredible fickleness of the common people; who one day would sacrifice to the apostles as gods, and the next day stone them to death as malefactors. What wise man will value himself by the applause of the multitude, and live upon the breath of the people, (that contingent judge of good and evil,) which rather attend the vain than the virtuous? But thus the common people dealt with Christ himself, crying one day, *Hosanna!* and the next day, *Crucify!* Note, 3. The miraculous re-

covery of the apostle, after his persecutors had stoned him: *He rose up, and came into the city.* His recovery seems to be miraculous, else his stoning would have disabled him from walking. God had farther work for this great apostle to do; and therefore neither the wrath of men, nor the rage of the devil, could at that time cut him off.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Observe here, The great and good use which the apostle makes of his miraculous recovery: he is no sooner upon his legs, but he travels to Derbe, to preach the gospel. Nothing do the faithful ministers of Christ more fervently desire, and more diligently endeavour, than to lay out their lives, their strength, their time, their all, for God, in his service, and to his glory. Yet observe farther, That notwithstanding the apostles were persecuted at Lystra and Iconium, yet they returned thither again; having planted churches there, they go back to water their own plantations. Persecutions did not, could not, make them forsake the plantations which they had newly made. It is not enough that the seed of the word be sown, it must be watered also, otherwise it will fade and wither, languish and die. But what did the apostles do, when they returned to visit their new-planted churches? *Ans.* 1. They confirmed and established them in the doctrine of the gospel; they exhorted them to steadfastness and perseverance in their holy religion, and armed them against the fears of affliction and persecution, for the sake of Christ and his holy religion; acquainting them, that they *must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Afflictions, like the waters of Marah, must be met with in our way to the heavenly Canaan: there is no coming at the crown but by the cross: the Head having been crowned with thorns, it is unsuitable that the feet should tread on roses. Christianity is the doctrine of the cross, which the ministers of Christ ought to let their people understand and know, that they may not

"think strange of the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had befallen them; but rather rejoice, inasmuch as they are partakers of the sufferings of Christ; that when his glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy," 1 Peter iv. 12, 13.

23 And when they had ordained their elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Here we have two farther instances and evidences of the apostles' care of these new-planted churches; and the first was, to settle them in church order, ordaining elders in every church, to be the guides and teachers of the rest, and this with fasting and prayer, in regard of the great solemnity and importance of the work. Hence learn, That ordination of ministers is a ministerial act; the officers of the church, and not of the people, must separate and set apart, consecrate and ordain, the persons who are to attend upon God and his church in holy things. When they, that is, Paul and Barnabas, had ordained them elders in every church. Learn, 2. That this solemn action ought to be very solemnly performed by fasting and prayer: *They ordained elders in every church, and prayed with fasting.* The second instance of this apostolical care was, their commending them to the Lord, on whom they had believed. That is, they committed them as young converts to the power of Christ, to strengthen and confirm them, and they committed them as their treasure to the care of Christ, to preserve and keep them. The greatest and best thing that the ministers of God can do, either present with or absent from their people, is to commit and commend them to the power and care of Christ, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: 26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled. 27 And when

they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

This last paragraph of the chapter acquaints us with the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in Syria, from whence they set out two years before, and where they were by the prayers of the church most affectionately recommended to the grace and assistance of God, for carrying on of that great work, to wit, the conversion of the Gentiles; which God had abundantly succeeded them in. Learn thence, that the best provision and preparation for any business, especially any business of importance, wherein the glory of God is concerned, is fervent prayer. Thus the apostles here, being sent out from Antioch with prayer, they return with praise; the Lord granted them both safety and success; safety as to their persons, and success as to their labours. Observe farther, Being returned to Antioch, they call the church together, and declare the great things which God had done with them and by them; to the intent, no doubt, the church might join with them in their praises and thanksgivings, who had before assisted them with their prayers and supplications: *They rehearsed all that God had done with them,* that he might have the entire praise and glory from them. Observe lastly, The subject matter of that report which they joyfully made to the church of Antioch; namely, how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles: that is, given them an opportunity to know, and ability to believe, the gospel, which like a door was formerly shut to them, but now mercifully opened; and which was the far greater mercy yet, Almighty God did not only open the door of the gospel to them, by bringing his word amongst them, but he opened the door of their hearts to receive it, and entertain it when brought. The opening the heart and mind of sinners effectually to receive the truths of the gospel, is the special work of the Holy Spirit of God. Lord! how insufficient are all external means, how excellent soever in themselves, to operate savingly upon men's minds, unless the Holy Spirit opens the understanding, as well as the ministers open

the scripture ! He that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, opened the Gentiles' hearts to receive the doctrine of faith, and inclined their wills to the obedience of faith. Eternally praised be God for the gracious illuminations, the sanctifying impressions, the powerful assistances, and the quickening influences, of the Holy Ghost, which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

#### CHAP. XV.

This chapter relates the second journey of St. Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem, where the first and most famous general council was held, for deciding this question, Whether the Gentiles converted to christianity, and living among the Jews, should be compelled to be circumcised, and observe the ceremonial law !—which was determined in the negative, as the chapter informs us.

**A**ND certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question.

Observe here, 1. How very forward Satan and his instruments were to sow the seeds of discord and dissension amongst the converted christians at Antioch : he takes the first opportunity to break the church in pieces, before it is well settled. O the restless malice of an envious devil against the gospel and kingdom of Jesus Christ ! *Certain men came down from Judea*, no doubt of the devil's sending, to disquiet the brethren, and distress the church. Observe, 2. The bone of contention thrown in by the false apostles, to disturb the disciples of Christ ; and that was, the urging the necessity of circumcision, and imposing that part of the Mosaic yoke upon the neck of the converted Gentiles, excluding them from all hopes of salvation, unless they were circumcised ; although circumcision was not commanded but only to the posterity of Abraham ; and as to them also, had received its abolishment at the death of Christ. Observe, 3. With what warmth of zeal the meek apostle, St. Paul, opposes this antichristian design of introducing circum-

cision into the christian church : *Paul and Barnabas had no small disputation with them* ; he that could become all things to all men, could not become sin to any man ; he therefore enters into the lists with them, and earnestly contends for the faith of the gospel, urging, that by the death of Christ we are freed from the whole ceremonial law : and that if circumcision were retained, for the same reason all the other ceremonies ought to be restored ; for the circumcised person was obliged to observe the whole ceremonial law. Observe, 4. The prudential course which the disciples at Antioch took for the deciding of this controversy ; they determined to send Paul and Barnabas up to Jerusalem, where, in a full and free synod of the apostles, the matter is debated, and finally decided. Learn hence, That the use of synods, or general assemblies of the bishops and pastors of the church, for deciding of controversies, for determining matters of faith, and directing to matters of practice, as it has been of ancient authority in the church of Christ, so it is of singular benefit and advantage both to ministers and people. Here Paul and Barnabas go up to the first synod, or general council at Jerusalem, to consult the apostles and elders about this question.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles : and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders ; and they declared all things that God had done with them.

Here note, 1. How that great but humble apostle, St. Paul, who had learned of his Master to be meek and lowly in spirit, was willing and content to be a servant and messenger of the church to the apostles, though he was nothing inferior to the chiefest apostle : *Paul and Barnabas went up to the apostles that were at Jerusalem*. The more holiness a christian has, the more humility he has. Humility is a great part of our holiness, it is an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession ; it is the great design of the gospel to make us humble, and keep us humble. Note, 1. With what great pleasure and

satisfaction Paul and Barnabas make report of the success of their ministry, both at Phenice, Samaria, and Jerusalem, in the conversion of the poor Gentiles, and with what joy the report was received and entertained: *They declared the conversion of the Gentiles, and it caused great joy unto all the brethren.* Thence learn, that nothing more rejoices the hearts of believers, than the hearing of souls brought home to God by converting grace, and thereby of the increasing and enlarging of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The Gentiles' conversion was joyful news to the saints at Jerusalem. Note, 3. With what great and due reverence and respect the church at Jerusalem received and entertained those laborious apostles, Paul and Barnabas, who were now sent unto them by the church at Antioch: *When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church;* that is, received with great veneration and regard, for their indefatigable labours in order to the Gentiles' conversion. Thence learn, That double honour and respect is certainly due and payable to such ministers of Christ as labour in the word and doctrine, and perform their duty to God and their people, with such zeal and application as becomes persons of their holy character and profession. O how beautiful should the feet be of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things, even the joyful tidings of salvation, to the ears of a lost world.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. 6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

That is, some Jews of the sect of the Pharisees, converted to christianity, thought and taught, that circumcision, and keeping of the law of Moses, was necessary to salvation, both to Jew and Gentile christians. Where observe, 1. How early the sound doctrine of christianity was corrupted by erring teachers. Observe, 2. That the spirit of infallibility with which the apostles were at that time certainly endued, did not prevent the rise of controversies and disputes in the first ages of the church;

nor yet silence and put an end to such disputes when risen; much less can a pretended infallible head of the church, and an unerring judge of controversies, now do it. Observe, 3. That errors and false opinions creeping into a church, are not a sufficient warrant to forsake the communion of that church. We find here, that in the most primitive and purest churches, even whilst the apostles themselves were upon the spot, dangerous errors crept into the church, and proved of such fatal and pernicious consequence, that the apostle wishes *they were even cut off that thus troubled them*, Gal. iv. 12. Separation then from a church, is not warrantable upon any other grounds, than that which makes a separation between God and that church, which is either the apostasy of that church into gross idolatry, or in point of doctrine into damnable heresy. Rev. ii. we read of Christ's walking among the seven golden candlesticks: and although some of them were sufficiently beameared, yet were they favoured with Christ's gracious presence. Observe, lastly, The regular and prudential means used by the apostles for the suppressing of this error which endangered the church's purity, and for quenching of this spark of dissension, which threatened the church's peace: *They gathered together at Jerusalem to consider of the matter:* that is, to consult about it, and debate upon it. Where note, 1. That though the apostles were inspired by the Holy Ghost, yet they made use of their own reason and judgment for the decision of this controversy. God's inspiration did not make the apostles' consultation needless, either for satisfying themselves, or silencing gain-sayers.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the

disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Observe here, 1. The council assembled, the first and most famous council of Jerusalem, the council of councils. In other councils were holy bishops: in this, inspired apostles, who could not err in matters of faith. Observe, 2. The grand debate, or matter in controversy; namely, whether faith in Christ were not sufficient to justification, unless circumcision, and an observation of the ceremonial law, were joined with it? Observe, 3. The persons managing this debate: the three great apostles, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James. The first that speaks in the council is St. Peter; from whence the papists would infer, that he, as head of the church, spake first; and consequently that the pope, whom they will have to be St. Peter's successor, ought to have the first and chief voice in all general councils. But all this is but presumption: for we shall find at ver. 13. St. James, who was then bishop of Jerusalem, says, *Hearken unto me*; and at ver. 19. gives the definitive sentence, saying, *My sentence is*; or, thus I judge and determine. Had St. Peter said this, it had been a better part of his pre-eminency, and made a louder noise, than *Pasce Oves*. Observe, 4. St. Peter's argument to prove that the believing Gentiles might be justified and saved without circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law. The argument runs thus: "The way of justification for all men, both Jew and Gentile, is one and the same: but Cornelius, a Gentile, with his whole family, by the blessing of God upon my ministry, was converted and justified, without being circumcised; therefore circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, ought not to be imposed as necessary to justification and salvation." Observe, 5. How St. Peter strengthens his argument, by declaring that what was done to Cornelius and his family, was by the special command of God; that God gave testimony of his approbation of Cornelius, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles, by sending down the Holy Ghost upon him and his, as well as upon us and ours, by purifying their hearts by faith. Where note, 1. That purifying begins at the heart; not at the head, not at the hands, but at the heart. The head may be purified from

false principles, the hands from false practices, and yet the heart remain unpurified, and continue a sink of pollution and uncleanness; therefore we must purify our hearts, as well as cleanse our hands; yea, first begin with our hearts: *Having purified their hearts by faith*. Note, 2. That as purifying begins at the heart, but must not end there; so faith is the instrumental cause of our purification. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin meritoriously, the Spirit of Christ efficiently; but faith is the instrument in the hand of the Spirit, which apprehends and applies the merit of that blood for pardon and purification. Observe, 6. The character given by St. Peter of the ceremonial law: he calls it a yoke, an intolerable yoke, too heavy to be borne by the Jews themselves, much more the Gentiles, whose neck God never designed this yoke for, but for the seed of Abraham only. Now the law of ceremonies, imposed upon the Jews, might well be called a yoke, if we consider, 1. Their number and variety: they were a multitude of legal observations. 2. Their burden and difficulty; the ceremonial law was a most laborious administration of a very painful service. 3. They were very costly and chargeable; so many bullocks, rams, and lambs for sacrifice, that the misers of this age would think themselves undone with the expense. 4. Their insufficiency: they were only shadows of good things to come, and could not make the observers of them perfect. Thus was the ceremonial law in itself a yoke and burden; and the imposing of it upon the Gentiles is called a *tempting of God*; that is, a dangerous provoking of him, because it never belonged to them, but to the Jews only, which yet were never able to bear it; that is, so to observe it, as to be justified and saved by it. Learn thence, That it was never the intent or design of God, that his people should be justified by their obedience to the ceremonial law: but that, being pressed with the weight and pinched with the uneasiness of the yoke, they should seek unto Christ for righteousness and life, who alone was the fulfiller of it. There was this difference between the ceremonial and moral law: the ceremonial law was therefore good, because God commanded it; the moral law was therefore commanded, because good. Christ, by his death, abrogated the former; but, by the obedience of his life, fulfilled the latter.

12 Then all the multitude kept

silence; and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

The second speech made in this council, was that of Barnabas and Paul, who declared what miracles God had enabled them to work among the Gentiles, which was an evidence of God's approbation of the Gentiles, though uncircumcised, and that he was pleased with their administration among them. Hence they conclude very well, that the miracles wrought among the Gentiles, and the Holy Ghost descending upon the Gentiles, was God's approving testimony, in the case that the believing Gentiles, without circumcision, should find no less acceptance with God than the believing Jews, who were of the circumcision.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me; 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world. 19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

Observe here, 1. The excellent order in which this grand debate was managed by the apostles: they do not break in upon one another like proud magisterial talkers,

so full of themselves that they could not hear one another speak; but while one speaks, all the rest silently and attentively hear, no one stopping another by rude and uncivil interruption: *After they had held their peace, James answered.* Observe, 2. The third and last speech uttered at this council at Jerusalem, was by St. James the bishop, and residuary apostle of the place: James said, *Hearken unto me.* Where note, 1. He puts the council in mind of the special favour and grace of God in sending the gospel among the Gentiles, which he calls his *visiting* of them; and the design of God in that gracious visitation, namely, *to take out of the Gentile world a people for his name.* Hence learn, 1. That when God gives his gospel to a people, he gives that people a merciful and gracious visitation. 2. That God's design in visiting a nation with and by the gospel, is to take out of them, and from amongst them, a people for his name; that is, a people to call upon his name, a people to be called by his name, and a people to honour and glorify, to advance and magnify, his holy name. Note, 2. With what wisdom and caution St. James, the president of the council, proceeds in the final deciding of this controversy: he purposes a mean betwixt the two extremes, between those that would have all the Mosaic rites imposed, and those that would have none at all: designing by this *medium* that neither the Jews should be too much offended, nor the Gentiles too heavily burdened; but brotherly love between both be maintained and preserved. Note, 3. How St. James, in deciding of this controversy, appeals to scripture, ver. 15. *To this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written.* Not to the authority of the council: the holy canon of the scriptures ought to overrule all debates; this is the infallible judge, which all the councils are to appeal to, and none must presume to appeal from. Note, lastly, That the sum of the council's determination came to this, "That circumcision should not be imposed upon the Gentiles; that the Gentiles nevertheless should so far judaize, or comply with the Jews, as to abstain from meats offered to idols, from things strangled, and from blood, and from fornication." All which are called indifferent things, because the three first were made so by the death of Christ, (after which there was to be no more distinction, either of meats or nations,) and the fourth, namely, fornication, is reckoned

amongst the indifferent things; because the Gentiles, though falsely, did think and speak it to be so: *Non est flagitium adolescentem scortari*. To prevent therefore giving offence to the Jews, the Gentiles are required to abstain from these things, till time and fuller acquaintance with the gospel did better inform them concerning their christian liberty. From this example learn, That whenever differences do arise in a church about tolerable matters, and indifferent things, the nearest course to unity, and a charitable compliance, is for both parties to step towards, and meet one another; and what may be left at liberty without apparent prejudice to purity, to be left for peace sake.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day. 22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. 23 And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner, The apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law*: to whom we gave no *such* commandment: 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from

blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Observe here, 1. That though the apostles were the infallible deciders, yet the elders, and the whole church, were unanimous consenters; for no contradiction to the determination of this controversy did arise from any hand, but there was a happy acquiescence in this apostolical decision: *It pleased the elders, and the whole church*. Observe, 2. The decrees of this synod, and the determination of this council at Jerusalem, are committed to writing, and despatched by unprejudiced messengers of their own to the church of the Gentiles, which was at Antioch. In which decretal epistle, 1. The false apostles who started this controversy, are sharply reprov'd. 2. Paul and Barnabas, for their courage, and constancy, are highly commended. 3. Judas and Silas are mentioned, to testify that these decrees were not forced nor counterfeited. 4. That it would conduce much to their advantage to have these decrees duly observed. Observe, 3. The divine authority of these decrees: they were dictated and directed by the Holy Ghost: *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*. That is, it seemed good unto us, being directed and assisted by the Holy Ghost, whose inspiration and conduct we have followed, not to impose unnecessary things upon you. Where note, That the Holy Ghost is against imposing unnecessary things as necessary, and making them the terms of church-communication. Here are four things imposed; namely, abstaining from meats offered to idols, from blood, from fornication, and from things strangled; but they are called *necessary things*. Two of them, to wit, abstaining from fornication and from things offered to idols, were of a simple and absolute necessity; the other two, namely, abstaining from things strangled, and from blood, were of an accidental, and temporary necessity for the present time, and to avoid giving scandal to the weak Jews, till they should be better informed, and better understand their liberty in Christ; for afterwards St. Paul sheweth that no creature of God is unclean, but that unto the pure all things are pure, 1 Tim. iv. 4. Tit. i. 15.

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when



they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle : 31 *Which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

Observe here, 1. With what fidelity and care Paul and Barnabas, and Judas and Silas, delivered this decretal epistle to the church at Antioch ; that is, to the whole body of christians, believing Jews and Gentiles, then and there assembled : *When they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle* ; that is, they called the whole church together, and presented the epistle to them. Observe, 2. How this decree was received ; namely, with universal joy and satisfaction : *When they had read, they rejoiced*. Every one in this christian council was a star devoted by his office to lead men to Christ ; but now being gathered together, and condensed into a counsel, they become a most bright and glorious constellation, every way prepared, by the emanations of heavenly light, to guide the church in this obscure affair ; and accordingly, their authority being so illustrious and commanding, and the decrees so pious and prudential, their determination was received with universal satisfaction : *They delivered the epistle : which when they had read, they rejoiced*. Observe, 3. What was the subject matter of their joy, and the special occasion of their rejoicing : *They rejoiced for the consolation* ; that is, for the great consolation which they had, in being freed from the burden of the legal ceremonies, though originally of divine institution, and appointed by God himself. From whence we learn, That liberty from toilsome ceremonies, though originally of divine institution, much more a freedom from superstitious ceremonies of human invention, is matter of great joy to the church of Christ. Lord ! what numerous and burdensome ceremonies has the church of Rome imposed upon her blind votaries ! When in their worship they would be thought truly zealous, they are really ridiculous. They please themselves perhaps, but cannot please their Maker : all the acceptance they will find with God will be signified to them in that chiding question, " Who hath required these things at your hands ? "

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and

confirmed *them*. 33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. 34 Notwithstanding, it pleased Silas to abide there still. 35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

*Judas and Silas being prophets* ; that is, persons extraordinarily inspired, and endued with eminent gifts for teaching and interpreting the holy scriptures ; they employed themselves at Antioch, confirming and building up their brethren in the faith of Christ. And after they had stayed at Antioch some time, they were with all kindness dismissed of the church there ; and Judas returned to Jerusalem, to acquaint the apostles with the reception which their letter had met with, and what obedience was readily given to their decrees.

36 And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren, in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

Observe here the pious and prudential care which St. Paul, who had planted churches, takes to visit and inspect them ; that he might see and understand how they did thrive and grow in the knowledge of Christ, and in their sincere obedience to him. This great apostle had been sowing the good seed of the word of God : his next care is, to examine and enquire whether the envious ones had not sowed tares in his absence. A minister's work, and a husbandman's business, are never at an end, but run round in a circle : *Redit labor actus in orbem* ; after plowing and sowing, there must be weeding and watering, before reaping and ingathering. Accordingly St. Paul resolves upon the visitation here mentioned ; *Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do*. Here note, 1. The visitors, Paul and Barnabas. 2. The visited, *our brethren*, both the elders and members of the church. 3. The action performed, *visiting* : the word imports a strict view, a most diligent and solicitous scrutiny, lest some errors in their absence might be crept into the doctrine and conversation of these new-planted

churches. 4. The place where the visitation is to be held: *in every city where they have preached the word of the Lord.* Where they had planted, they were obliged to water; and where they had begotten any to the christian faith, they thought it their duty to nurture and nourish them: and therefore, though there were presbyters no doubt in every city, yet Paul and Barnabas challenged to themselves a power of visitation, where they had personally preached. The apostles who first converted them, had a peculiar right to inspect and govern them. Converted souls, and planted churches, must be farther visited, observed, and watered. 5. The end and design of the visitation: *to see how they do, and what they do; to take an account of their faith and practice.* From the whole observe, 1. A disease which the churches of the apostles' own planting were supposed to be liable and obnoxious to: the purest of churches and best of men in this militant and mortal state, are apt to fall into distempers: witness this chapter. Where we find the converted Jews nauseating the bread of life, and making it their choice to pick and eat the rubbish off the partition-wall which Christ had demolished; I mean circumcision, and the legal ceremonies, which, though expired at the death of Christ, and by this time had an honourable burial, yet they attempt to pull out of their graves, and give a resurrection to them. Such distempers will be in the purest churches, if we consider the hereditary corruption which is in all by nature; the remains of it in those who are renewed by grace, and the endeavours of Satan to solicit these remains, and invite them forth into act and exercise. Observe, 2. The remedy resolved upon for preventing and healing of this disease; namely, apostolical visitation, and episcopal inspection, as the word signifies. The constitution of the church is such, that it cannot continue long in repair, without inspection and government: for though the universal church is secure, being built upon a rock, yet particular churches are liable to dilapidations: and accordingly it is the duty of the governors of the church frequently to inspect the authority of those who preach, to examine their doctrines, to enquire into their lives, to give rules for preserving order, and to censure those who neglect those rules, and disturb that order. In fine, we see the church of Christ must be governed; in that government there must be a superiority in some, and subordination in others;

superiors must frequently visit, and narrowly inspect the doctrine, the lives, and manners, both of the ministers and members of the church, according to the practice, and example of these two great apostles, Paul and Barnabas; who said, *Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word, and see how they do.*

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus: 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.

St. Paul having made a motion to Barnabas, in the foregoing verses, to visit and inspect the new-planted churches, Barnabas very readily complied with the motion; but desired that he might take his nephew John Mark along with him. This St. Paul consented not unto; because he left them at Pamphylia, and did not accompany them constantly in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. St. Paul was in the right; Mark's cowardice in leaving them when they undertook a tedious and hazardous journey to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, was a considerable objection against his present going with them, and weighed more than his consanguinity, or nearness of blood to Barnabas. Accordingly, St. Paul insisted upon it, that he should not go now along with them: but this occasioned a very sharp and unhappy contention between them: inasmuch, that these two great and good men parted asunder, Barnabas going to Cyprus, and St. Paul to Cilicia; but God overruled this evil for good, causing their separation to tend to the publication and farther spreading of the gospel. Hence learn, 1. How industrious, yea, ambitious, the devil is to sow the seeds of discord and dissension amongst the members, but especially amongst the ministers, of Jesus Christ; and

how ready he is to take all occasions to divide them. These holy men of God, these great apostles, whose hearts were united in the work of God, and went hand in hand together to plant and propagate the everlasting gospel, divide among themselves, and are parted by Satan's policy and their own passions. Learn, 2. That the holiest and wisest of men are but men; men of like passions with other men; and, whilst, on this side of heaven, not wholly free from passionate infirmities. These two great apostles verified here by their actions, what they affirmed before in their words, Acts xiv. 15. *We are men of like passions unto you.* Learn, 3. That natural affections are apt to oversway the wisest and best of men. Barnabas's great love to his kinsman here prevailed contrary to his judgment. Learn, 4. That such is the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, that he knows how to bring good out of the greatest evil, and to overrule sin itself, and make it subservient to his own glory and his church's good. The Lord was pleased to overrule these divisions and dissensions betwixt Paul and Barnabas, for enlarging the kingdom of Christ, and for spreading the gospel farther into several nations. Observe, lastly, How this reflection upon John Mark's faint-heartedness in declining the hardships and the hazards of the ministry, made him for the future more vigilant and valiant in the cause of the gospel, which occasioned that kind salutation which St. Paul gives him, *Colos. iv. 10.* Though sin be only evil, absolutely evil, and infinitely evil, yet the wisdom and goodness of God sanctifies the miscarriages of his saints, rendering them more humble for the time passed, and more watchful and vigilant for time to come. Thus it was with Mark here: he was humbled for his sin, and afterwards became profitable to St. Paul for the ministry, was his fellow-labourer, and the apostle gives a special charge to the Colossians to entertain him kindly whenever he should come unto them, *Colos. iv. 10.* *Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, when he comes unto you, receive him.*

#### CHAP. XVI.

**T**HEN came he to Derbe and Lystra; and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which

was a Jewess, and believed; but his father ~~was~~ a Greek: 2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter gave us a sad account of a dissonance and difference arising between Paul and Barnabas, upon which they parted; Barnabas sails for Cyprus, but what success he had there the scripture says not. St. Paul goes through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches, and doing good service for God in his peregrinations and travels. Here observe, That St. Paul and Silas, before they set forth to their work, were in a solemn manner (by prayer) *recommended by the brethren to the grace of God*, chap. xv. 40. And accordingly their labours are succeeded and blessed. Barnabas and Mark set forth for Cyprus; but we read not of any solemn recommendation of them by the brethren to the grace of God; nor a word of any success they had in their work: teaching us the great necessity of fervent prayer to precede, accompany, and follow the preaching of the gospel. Let ministers pray, and people pray, and engage all the prayers they can for the success of their ministry. Lord, let me steep that seed I sow amongst the people in tears and prayers before I scatter it! O pour out thy Spirit with thy word, that it may be mighty through God for pulling down the strong holds! Verily there is so little efficacy in ordinances, for want of fervent wrestlings with God in prayer. Observe next, The places which Paul and Silas in their travels first came unto; namely, Derbe and Lystra, where he finds young Timothy, whom he takes along with him, and breeds him up for a gospel-minister, calls him his fellow-worker and companion in his travels. Note farther, The account here given of Timothy's birth and parentage; his mother Eunice was a believing Jewess; his father was a Greek, a Gentile; for which reason Timothy was not circumcised, because it was not lawful for the mother to have her child circumcised against her husband's consent. Now St. Paul, intending to take Timothy along with him as his companion in preaching the

gospel, that his ministry might be the more acceptable to the Jews, who knew him to be uncircumcised, because the son of an uncircumcised father, he takes him and circumcises him; but at the same time Titus, who was a Gentile, both by father and mother, him he would not circumcise; neither suffering the yoke of circumcision to be laid upon the Gentiles, which God had never imposed, nor would be seen to countenance those who held circumcision necessary to salvation. O what an admirable pattern has this great and humble apostle left to posterity! he became all things to all men, and either used or refused indifferent things, according as the use or disuse of them tended to the church's education, and men's salvation. From whence learn, That in things not absolutely necessary to salvation, christians ought to act prudentially, and either do, or not do, some things of lesser moment, according as it may promote, and best conduce to the church's peace and edification.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

The sense is this, That as Paul and Silas passed through the cities in Syria and Cilicia, they delivered to the several churches, as they passed along, the decrees to observe, which were ordained by the apostles and elders met in council at Jerusalem, whereby those churches were established in the faith, and many more every day converted unto Christ. Here note, 1. The messengers which delivered these decrees, Paul and Silas, with a special regard unto the church's unity and peace. Behold here an excellent pattern for christians in general, and the ministers of the gospel in particular; as to maintain truth, so to procure, promote, and preserve the church's peace. Truth and peace, which God hath joined together, *Sech.* viii. 19. let none dare to put asunder. Note, 2. What it was that St. Paul here made the delivery of: the decrees made by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem; not the decrees made by the whole church, but by the ministers of the church only: none so fit to determine church-differences as church-officers. Note, 3. To whom

these decrees were delivered; namely, to the churches, as they passed along through the several cities; so many cities, so many churches: the whole company of christians within a city and the adjacent territory, were wont to be framed into a christian society or church, and several congregations made but one church. To set up churches against churches, to set up churches in churches, and to gather churches out of churches, has no precedent, no warrant, no countenance from any phrase of scripture, or practice of the apostles' times. Note, 4. The end for which these decrees were delivered; namely, to bring all the churches to unity and uniformity; to unity in judgment, and uniformity in practice, that they might be all of one heart, and one way. Learn hence, That unity and uniformity among the churches of Christ is a thing to be earnestly desired and endeavoured; their unity is their strength and beauty both. Note, lastly, The success and fruit of the delivery of these decrees to the churches, ver. 5. *So were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.* Where observe, A double blessing accruing to the churches: the one of confirmation, *So were the churches established*: the other of augmentation. *They increased in number daily.* Learn, 1. That as divisions do shake and unsettle, so unity and uniformity do establish, and confirm, the church of Christ: *So were the churches established.* 2. That it is a blessed thing to hear of the church's increasing, provided it be by way of addition, not division: to hear of churches multiplying, by the number of converts increasing, is happy; but to multiply churches by breaking churches in pieces, is a sad multiplication. The Lord keep his churches from such increases! and the Lord pardon those who for private interest have so increased churches by gathering churches out of churches, pretendedly for greater purity-sake, but really for advantage-sake! Doctrines crying up purity to the ruin of unity, reject; for the gospel calls for unity as well as for purity.

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

Observe here, How the apostle and his companions had a desire and design to propagate the gospel in several provinces, but were forbidden by a secret impulse of the Holy Spirit. Learn thence, That the frustrating our attempts, and disappointing our designs to preach the gospel to particular places, which we were purposed to go unto, doth sometimes arise from the Holy Ghost: the apostle intended to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not. The very journeyings of the apostles, and first preachers of the gospel, as well as their divine exercises, were all ordered by the wisdom and will of God; they might neither speak, nor act, nor walk, but according to divine directions: *They were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.* Thus Almighty God at pleasure orders the candle of the gospel to be removed out of one room into another, sends it from one place and people to another, and accordingly ought all places and persons to prize it highly, and improve it faithfully.

8 And they passing by Mysia, came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

These words are a relation of a message from heaven unto St. Paul, to direct him in his preaching and publishing of the gospel, both as to the place where, and as to the persons to whom, he was to deliver it. Where note, The manner of it: it was by a vision, *A vision appeared.* The time of it, it was in the night, the bringer of it, a man of Macedonia: the matter of it, help for the Macedonians, interpreted (ver. 10.) to be by the preaching of the gospel. Learn hence, 1. That no men in the world want help, like them that want the gospel. Of all distresses, want of the gospel cries loudest for relief and help; for by want of the gospel, they want every thing that is worth having; they want Jesus Christ, who is revealed only by the gospel; they want communion with God, they want the

comforts and refreshments of ordinances, and they will at last want heaven and salvation. But that which is most deplorable is this: Those that want the gospel, though they want all these things, yet are they not sensible that they want any thing. Learn, 2. That the sending of the gospel to one nation, place, or people, and not to another, proceeds from the determinate will and pleasure of Almighty God, and is the effect of his own free grace and good pleasure: Stay not in Asia, go not into Bithynia, but come over into Macedonia; *Even so, Father, for thus it seemed good in thy sight.*

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; 12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony. And we were in that city abiding certain days. 13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made: and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

A farther account is here given of St. Paul's travels to preach the gospel; he departs from Troas to Samothracia, from thence to Neapolis, and thence to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia. Here on the sabbath-day he went out of the city to the river's side, where a meeting place for prayer, say some, was built, and made use of, as being remote from the noise and observation of the multitude. In this oratory, St. Paul preached to the women, they being both most numerous and most zealous; and God gives him the seal of his ministry in the conversion of Lydia. In which famous conversion observe how particularly

the Holy Ghost is in relating the several circumstances belonging to it; she is described by her person and sex, a certain woman; by her name, Lydia; by her calling and employment, a seller of purple; by her city, Thyatira; by her pious disposition, she worshipped God. Her conversion is described, 1. By the efficient cause of it; the Lord opened her heart. 2. By the instrumental cause of it; her attending to the things that were spoken of Paul. Learn, 1. That the hearts of persons are naturally shut up and fast barred against Jesus Christ. 2. That the opening of the heart to receive Jesus Christ, is the peculiar effect of the sovereign power and omnipotent grace of God. 3. That till God opens the heart of a sinner, the preaching of the gospel little affecteth, though never so plainly and persuasively preached. That when once the heart is opened, the ear will not be shut, the person is truly attentive to the preaching of the gospel: *The Lord opened Lydia's heart, and she attended.* Observe next, The seal of her conversion and salvation received by her: *She was baptized, and her whole house.* It was the ordinary way of the apostles to baptize households; not that they were sure that they were all believers, or that the family governors could make them so; but it was their duty to devote all their power to God, and to do their utmost to persuade; and God usually succeeded their endeavours. Note here, That the church of God for near seventeen hundred years, never refused the baptizing of infants of believing parents, as being taken into covenant with themselves. Having then for so many ages been in the possession of this privilege, we may more reasonably require the Anabaptists to prove by express scripture, that children were not baptized by the apostles, (when they baptized whole families, yea, whole nations, according to their commission, *Matt. xxviii. 19.*) than they can require us to prove that they were. Lydia and her house were baptized, says the text; that is, says the Syriac, Lydia and her children. Lydia, by reason of her faith in Christ, having a right to baptism, all her family, upon her undertaking to bring them up in the knowledge of Christ, were admitted to the ordinance with her. Observe, lastly, A special fruit and evidence of Lydia's conversion: she constrained the apostles with an amicable violence, by fervent entreaties and passionate importunities, to receive the civilities of her

house. Converted persons have so much love to Christ's ministers, who were the instruments of their conversion, that they greatly desire to express it by all acts of possible kindness: *If ye have judged me faithful, come into my house, and abide there; and she constrained us.*

16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. 18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. 19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place, unto the rulers, 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21 And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. 23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the gaoler to keep them safely: 24 Who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

*As we went to prayer, a damsel possessed met us.* That is, As the apostles went towards the forementioned place of prayer, a damsel possessed with the devil, by whose inspiration she foretold future things, and revealed many secrets to them that consulted her, followed them, crying out, *These are the servants of the most*

*high God, who declare unto us the way of salvation.* Where observe, 1. That the father of lies sometimes speaks the truth, though never for truth's sake, but for his own advantage: here what the devil said, was truth, but it was for devilish ends; he transforms himself now into an angel of light, to draw men on to believe him the prince of darkness. Observe, 2. How St. Paul refuses the devil's testimony concerning himself, even when he spake the truth. The testimony of truth from the father of lies, is enough to render truth itself suspected. Observe, 3. The authority which St. Paul takes upon him in the name of Christ to dispossess the devil, and cast him out of the damsel: *Paul said, I command thee in the name of Jesus to come out of her: and he came out the same hour.* These words St. Paul uttered by the motion of the Holy Spirit, and relying by faith on the promise of Christ made by himself to his apostles, Mark xvi. 17. *That in his name they should cast out devils;* accordingly he received power from on high to cast out this daring devil. Observe, 4. How Satan seeks to be revenged on Paul for dispossessing of him: he raises up an hot persecution, and soon casts him into prison, who had cast the devil out of the damsel. If we disturb and trouble Satan, he will be sure to trouble and disturb us. Such ministers as make the greatest opposition against Satan, must expect to meet with the greatest opposition from him. Observe, 5. Who were the instruments which Satan stirs up to raise this persecution against the apostles: they were the rulers and the rabble: *The multitude rose up, and the magistrates rent their clothes, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.* Thus were the holy apostles, and innocent servants of Jesus Christ, imprisoned, and treated as the vilest malefactors, only for opposing Satan, and seeking the welfare of mankind. Observe, lastly, That love of money was the root of all this persecution. The damsel's masters perceiving that their gain was gone, and that she could help them to no more money by telling people their fortunes, the devil of discontent possessed them. They stir up persecution against the apostles, they cast them into prison, into the inward prison, and to make all sure, set them in the stocks.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto

God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.

The apostles are here, by Satan and his instruments, cast into prison; but observe, they had their prison-comforts. 1. The joy of their hearts runs out at their lips: they sang praises unto God, when their bodies were in prison, and their feet were in the stocks; these holy servants of God were not only meek and patient, but joyous and cheerful under persecution, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for him who had undergone so much indignity and shame for them. 2. They enjoy sweet communion with God in prayer: *At midnight they prayed, and the prisoners heard them.* No place can be improper, no time unseasonable, for prayer. No prison can bolt out God, nor deprive us of our communion with him: prayer will get up to heaven in spite of all opposition either of hell or earth. Observe, 3. How sudden the answer, and how sensible the return of prayer was which the Lord graciously gave his suffering servants: *Suddenly there was a great earthquake.* This earthquake was an infallible sign of God's audience; that he heard them, and would stand by them. Observe, 4. The powerful efficacy of St. Paul's prayer: his prayer shook the heavens, the heavens shook the earth, the earth shook the prison, even to the very foundations of it. Prayer has a divine kind of omnipotency in it: *Vincit invincibilem et ligat omnipotentem:* "It overcomes God with his own strength." Observe, 5. What influence this earthquake had upon the gaoler: it occasioned such an heartquake in him, that to give himself ease, silly soul, he resolves to murder himself. Lord! how miserable are the consolations which the carnal and unregenerate world have recourse and fly unto, when trouble and distress take bold upon

them ! They run to an halter, to rid them of their trouble, having no God to go unto, and thereby plunge themselves into endless troubles, yea, eternal torments. Observe, lastly, How kind the apostle was to his cruel keeper : he that hurt the apostles' feet with the stocks, hears the apostles crying unto him in the midst of the earthquake, *Do thyself no harm*. Good men ever have been, and are, men of tender and compassionate dispositions ; not so solicitous for their own liberties, as for others' lives. The apostles might have held their peace, and suffered the gaoler to have slain himself, and thereby made their own escape ; but they preferred the gaoler's eternal salvation before their own temporal liberty and happiness : *Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm*.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas ; 30 And brought them out, and said, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?* 31 And they said, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

As if the gaoler had said, " *Sirs, now I see and acknowledge that the doctrine taught by you is the truth of the eternal God ; and he hath by this miraculous earthquake testified to me, that you are his true and faithful servants : tell me therefore, I beseech you, what I must do to attain salvation ?*" They answer, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, &c*. That is, " *If you and your family receive the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and regulate your lives according to it, you shall be saved*. Here note, 1. That scornors and persecutors will become tremblers, when once God hath touched their hearts, and wounded their consciences with remorse for sin. The gaoler here came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas ; trembling under a sense of his guiltiness, and falling down upon his knees to ask them forgiveness. Note, 2. That trembling sinners are always inquisitive, yea, very inquisitive, persons. An awakened conscience will put a man upon enquiry, upon great and much enquiry, what he should do. Note, 3. That the chief thing which the trembling

soul enquires after, is the business of salvation : *What shall I do to be saved ?* Note, 4. That trembling sinners, and troubled souls, must be directed to Jesus Christ, and to faith in him, as the only way to obtain salvation by him ; *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes ; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

Behold how sudden and strange a change was wrought in this gaoler. Before his conversion he was cruel, barbarous, and hard-hearted ; now he is meek, merciful, and compassionate. He that before had beaten, imprisoned, and hurt the holy apostles' feet in the stocks, now pities them, mourns over them, and washes their stripes. Learn thence, That religion, and the grace of God, softens and mollifies the hardest hearts, sweetens the sourest natures, and changes the most barbarous and bloody dispositions. Behold this gaoler, before his conversion, a savage persecutor, a tiger, and a vulture, like the demoniac in the gospel, exceeding fierce : but now dispossessed of his fury, and by grace turned into a lamb for meekness, and a dove for innocency. Observe, 2. How the gaoler believing, he and all his house were baptized. The apostle denied not baptism to the gaoler's household, upon the gaoler's sincere profession of the christian faith ; yet no doubt he promised to use his utmost endeavours to bring them to the knowledge and obedience of Jesus Christ. Observe, lastly, How improbable it is that the gaoler and his household were baptized by dipping. We do not deny the lawfulness of baptizing by immersion ; but we cannot assert the absolute and indispensable necessity of it. St. Paul, who was newly washed, and his sores dressed, occasioned by stripes, cannot be supposed either to go out himself, or to carry the gaoler and all his family, in the dead of the night, to the river or a pond to baptize them ; neither is it in the least probable, that St. Paul himself was baptized by dipping. See Acts ix. 18, 19. *He arose, and was baptized ; and when he had received meat, he was strengthened*. The context may convince us, that he was baptized in his lodgings, being sick and weak, having fasted three days, and being in a very low condition, partly by his mira-



culous vision, and partly by his extraordinary fasting: it was no ways probable that Ananias should carry him out to a river in that condition, to plunge him in cold water. Dipping then, surely, cannot be so essential unto baptism, as for want of it to pronounce the baptism of all the reformed churches throughout the world to be null and void, as some amongst us do.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house.

See here a special evidence and sweet fruit of the gaoler's conversion; he brings the apostles, who were the instruments of his conversion, into his house; and having washed their stripes, refreshes their bowels: he set meat before them. The truth of conversion will manifest itself in a thankfulness, and other tokens of respect, towards those whom God has made the instruments of our conversion. True conversion changes men's thoughts of God's ministers, and causes men to love and honour those whom before they did disdain and scorn, persecute and hate. Observe, 2. How full of joy and spiritual rejoicing this new convert was: *he rejoiced*. O the sweet fruit of faith in Christ! namely, *peace* with God, and *joy* in the Holy Ghost. Conversion always puts men into a joyful state: rejoicing, spiritual rejoicing, is the portion, the proper portion, and the peculiar portion, of converted persons: as it is sometimes their present portion. The gaoler, upon his believing in God, instantly rejoiced.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. 36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. 37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves, and fetch us out.

Observe here, 1. The willingness of the magistrates to release those innocent pri-

soners, the holy apostles, and what might be the probable occasion of it; namely, 1. The terror of the earthquake, which affected them with fear. 2. The consciousness of their own guilt, for their injurious dealing with the apostles, scourging them, and casting them into prison, only for casting a devil out of a possessed servant. The consciences of the vilest and worst of men, at one time or other, do make furious reflections upon them for their cruelty and injustice towards the ministers and members of Jesus Christ. Observe, 2. How the innocent apostles refused to be thus clandestinely released, and privately brought out of prison: they were unjustly laid in prison, and without any legal trial scourged and bound, contrary to the law and privileges of the Romans; and therefore the apostles insist upon their privilege, and would not be content with a sneaking clandestine dismissal, after such a public ignominious punishment, injuriously inflicted on them. Learn thence, That it is lawful to plead our right by law against unjust magistrates; and though we must not return evil for evil, yet we may use all lawful means for redressing and removing our own grievances. Thus did St. Paul here; yet more for the gospel's sake than his own, lest the word of God should be despised with their persons.

38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. 39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. 40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Observe here, 1. What an awe God has over the consciences of men in general, and of magistrates in particular: they stoop to their prisoners, and beseech them to come out of prison, and to depart from the city. The same can God do for all his servants who have been disgracefully and spitefully used. He can make their enemies become their benefactors at his pleasure, and their very persecutors shall be their deliverers. Observe, 2. That as desirable as liberty was, those honest hearts chose

rather to go without it, than to accept it upon dishonourable terms, either to the blemishing of their innocency, or to the aspersion of the gospel. Had they been privately released, they might have been publicly slandered for making their escape by compact with the gaoler, whom they had now made their own; therefore they stay in prison, till publicly discharged, and then they go forth: *The magistrates besought them, and brought them forth.* Observe, 3. The holy use which these good men made of their restored liberty: they visit the brethren and comfort them, and confirm them and strengthen them in the faith of Christ.

Thus this chapter concludes with an account of what St. Paul did and suffered at Philippi, where he laid the foundation of that eminent church, to which he wrote his epistle, which bears the title of his *Epistle to the Philippians*; wherein he mentions many fellow-labourers that he had there, in the work of the gospel, Phil. iv. 3. *Help those which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement, and other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.* It is a happy encouragement to the ministers of Christ, when they are all found helping, and not hindering one another; strengthening each other's hands, and not saddening one another's hearts; but, by united endeavours, in public preaching, and private inspection, promoting the grand design of the gospel, namely, to fear God, honour their superiors, love one another. So be it.

#### CHAP. XVII.

The foregoing chapter acquaints us with the travels of St. Paul to Lystra and Philippi, and also with the hard usage which he met with at both places; at Lystra he cured a cripple, and was stoned for it; at Philippi he cast out a devil, and was scourged and imprisoned for it. Thus bonds and afflictions did abide him wherever he went. To do good and to suffer evil, is the portion of the ministers and members of Christ.

**N**OW when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the

dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

This chapter begins with St. Paul's travels to Thessalonica, the chief city of Macedonia, where this apostle gathered a famous church, unto which he wrote two excellent epistles. Coming to Thessalonica at this time, he went, (as his manner was,) into the synagogue, not into a private house. As Christ taught daily in the temple, so did his apostles teach in the synagogues: it was the false apostles that crept into houses, and led captive silly women, as St. Paul complains, 2 Tim. iii. 6. Truth seeks no corners, but rejoices to be publicly seen; besides, the gospel was first to be preached to the Jews, and, upon their rejection, to the Gentiles. Accordingly the apostle takes the advantage of the synagogue, where all the Jews were gathered together, and preaches to them Jesus and the resurrection. Where observe, The first grand point which the apostle insisted upon, was to demonstrate, that this Jesus, whom he preached, was the long-expected *Messias*. Now to prove this, he produces the prophecies of the Old Testament, and compares them with what was both done and suffered by Christ, making all things as plain and obvious to the eye of their understanding, as if they had been seen with bodily eyes; satisfactorily demonstrating to their judgments, that Jesus is the Christ. Observe, lastly, How the gospel is like the sea: what is lost in one place, is gained in another; St. Paul is sent away from Philippi, but by that means the gospel was preached at Thessalonica. God overrules the motions of his ministers, and the madness and malice of their persecutors, for the furtherance and spreading of the gospel.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city,

crying, These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also ; 7 Whom Jason hath received ; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus. 8 And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

The foregoing verses acquaint us with St. Paul's preaching at Thessalonica in the Jewish synagogue, as also with the argument he insisted upon ; namely, that the Messiah, according to the scriptures, was to die, and rise again from the dead ; and that Jesus, whom he preached, was that Messiah. Now these verses before us, acquaint us with the different success which this sermon had upon the hearers : some believed, others were blinded ; some were converted, others enraged. O the different and contrary effects which the word has upon its hearers ! opening the eyes of some, closing the eyes of others ; to some it is a savour of life unto life, to others the savour of death unto death. Those to whom the clearest light is afforded, who sinfully shut their eyes against it, and say they will not see ; how just is it with God to close their eyes judicially, and say they shall not see ! Observe, 2. How the apostle specifies, and particularly declares, the success which the preaching of the gospel had upon the people of Thessalonica, both good and bad. The good success in the fourth verse : some (though few) of the Jews were converted ; but many proselytes, and not a few of the Gentiles, and a considerable number of the devout women, and honourable matrons of the city. The bad event and success is recorded, ver. 5. The unbelieving Jews called the lewd fellows of the city together into a confederacy with them, and raised a persecution against the apostles. Thence note, 1. That the progress and prosperous success of the gospel ever was, is, and will be, a grievous eye-sore to the devil and his instruments. Note, 2. That the worst enemies which the gospel ever met with in the world, are the unbelieving Jews. Here, *the Jews which believed not*, engaged the rabble on their sides, who are the fittest tools to raise persecution against the ministers of Christ : *The Jews which believed not, took certain lewd fellows of the baser*

*sort, and assaulted, &c.* Note, 3. That the devil's old method for raising persecution against the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, has been and still is, to lay the most grievous crimes falsely to the christian's charge. Here the apostles are charged with innovation and sedition, with *turning the world upside down*. Thus afterwards, in the primitive times, whatever calamities came upon the state and kingdom, whatever commotions or tumults did arise in nations, presently christianity was blamed, and instantly the christians were cast to the lions ; whereas it is not the gospel, but men's corruption, which breeds disturbances : as it is not the sea, but the foulness of the stomach, that makes the man sea-sick. Note, 4. How mercifully and marvelously the Lord delivered the apostles, Paul and Silas, at this time, out of the hands of their persecutors : *They sought them in the house of Jason, but found them not*. The devil now missed of his prey, for the Lord hid the apostles here, as he did the prophets before, Jeremiah and Baruch, *Jer. xxxvi. 26.* having more work and farther service for them to do. The wise husbandman doth not commit all his corn to the oven, but reserves some for seed. Note, lastly, That as the panther, when it cannot come at the person, will fly upon and tear the picture in pieces ; so these enraged persecutors, finding that the apostles were escaped their hands, fall foul upon Jason who had entertained them, and drag him before the rulers and magistrates, charging him as an abettor of treason ; yet observe, how God overruled the hearts of these rulers, that they did offer no violence to Jason, but only took security of him, for his own and others' appearance before them when called for : *Thus the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of tribulation, and to make a way for escape.*

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea : who coming *thither*, went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed : also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. 13 But when the Jews

of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

Observe here, 1. The pious and prudential care which the brethren took of the holy apostles, and the means which they used for their preservation: *They presently sent them away unto Berea.* The devil seeks nothing so industriously as the lives of the ministers of the gospel; (they making the greatest opposition to him and his kingdom;) but God finds out ways and means for their preservation, to reserve them for farther work and future service: *The apostles came by night unto Berea.* Observe, 2. St. Paul makes again the Jews' synagogues his preaching-place here at Berea, as he had done before at Thessalonica, ver. 2. and did afterwards at Athens, ver. 17. O how close did the apostle keep to his commission, to preach Jesus Christ first to the Jews, and to wait upon them with the repeated tender of the gospel, till they put it far from them, and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, before he turned to the Gentiles. Observe, 3. The honourable character which the Holy Ghost here gives of these Bereans: *They were more noble than those of Thessalonica*; that is, of a more ingenuous, mild, and pliable temper of mind; they were not so possessed with prejudice and obstinacy against the gospel; they did not meet it with rage, but thought it worthy their search and serious enquiry; for which they are styled *more noble*. Thence learn, That to be of a teachable temper, and tractable towards the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the best sort of gentility and nobleness. The Bereans were better bred, and better descended than the Thessalonians, yet not by civil human dignity, but by spiritual and divine dignation; God gave them this preparation of their heart, and made them differ from their neighbours: *These were more noble than those of Thessalonica.* Observe, 4. What it is these Bereans are so highly commended for; namely, for *searching the scriptures*. Where note, 1. That the scriptures then were in the vulgar tongue. 2. That as they were in their own tongue, so the laity had them in their own hands. 3. That the common people did read them, and heard them read, searched, and examined them; and yet were so far from censure and blame, that they met with commendation for it

from God himself. From the whole note, That a diligent reading of, and daily searching into, the holy scriptures, is a duty incumbent upon all those in whose hands the scriptures are or may be found. These christians at Berea searching the scriptures, were a noble pattern for all succeeding christians to imitate and follow. Observe, lastly, How the inveterate malice of the unbelieving Jews at Thessalonica pursues the apostles as far as Berea, ver. 13. *When the Jews at Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.* As Christ sends his ministers, so the devil sends his messengers from place to place; and as the ministers of Christ are never weary of his service for the good of souls, so persecutors are restless, they will compass sea and land to harass and drive the faithful ambassadors of Christ from city to city, and, if it were in their power, to banish them out of the world. Lord! help all thy faithful ministers to execute this piece of holy revenge upon Satan, that we may be even with him for all his malice and spite against us. O let us endeavour to do all the possible service, and the utmost good we can, wherever we come.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. 15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus, for to come to him with all speed, they departed. 16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. 18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. 19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know

what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is ? 20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears : we would know therefore what these things mean. 21 For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

The prudential care which the believing brethren took of the holy apostle, was observed before, ver. 10. His life being in danger at Thessalonica, they sent him to Berea ; being pursued to Berea, they sent him to Athens, and detain Silas and Timotheus ; not that St. Paul was more fearful than the other two ; but more useful, and consequently more hateful to the unbelieving Jews, and his life more sought after. To preserve which, his friends use an innocent policy : they make as if they sent him away to sea, but really he goes on foot to Athens : *Immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea.* Hence learn, That human policy and prudence may lawfully be made use of, in subserviency to divine providence. It was good policy and great providence in the apostle and his friends to look one way and go another ; to look towards the sea, and to go to Athens by land. There is a wise and holy subtilty in foreseeing the evil, and hiding ourselves : a serpent's eye is a singular ornament in a dove's head. Piety without policy, is too simple to be safe ; and policy without piety, is too subtle to be good. The sagacity of the serpent, and the innocency of the dove, both may and ought to go together. Observe, 2. The place which the apostle comes to : Athens, a sovereign city, a famous university ; the eye of Greece, as Greece was reputed the eye of the world. Yet, notwithstanding all their scholarship, they were ignorant of God in Christ ; all their learning could not teach them to attain any saving knowledge, but both city and university are wholly given to idolatry. Learn hence, That human learning alone can never teach any place or people the divine truths of Christ and his gospel. 'Tis a good hand-maid, but a bad mistress ; 'tis good in itself, but when corrupted by a busy devil and a base heart, it degenerates into the worst instrument in the world : for *Corruptio optima est pessima* ; "The sweetest wine makes the sourest vinegar." Observe, 3.

The temper of the men of Athens described to us : they were great and greedy newsmongers, they spent their time in telling and hearing news of any sort. All which was the effect of an itching curiosity ; a disease which has descended from age to age, from place to place, from person to person, occasioning a sinful expense of time, which can never be recalled ; the neglect of our necessary affairs, which can never be redeemed ; spreading false stories of others, and provoking displeasure against ourselves. O how wise and happy were it, if we enquired after news, not as Athenians, but as christians ; that we might know the better how to manage our prayers and praises for the church and nation. Observe, 4. How the wickedness and idolatry of this place did vehemently affect this great apostle : *His spirit was stirred*, when he saw the city full of idols, and *wholly given to idolatry*. Their idolatry put him into a *paroxysm*, as the word signifies ; his mind was in a concussion by contrary passions : he was affected first with sorrow and grief, that a city should be so learned, and yet so blind ; next with indignation and anger, at the superabounding idolatry of that knowing people ; and lastly, with fervent zeal, and an ardent desire to undeceive them, and better inform them. In order to which, he takes all opportunities, both in the city, in the synagogue, and in the market-place, to preach to the people, to dispute with the philosophers, particularly the Epicureans, who denied the providence of God, and the immortality of the soul ; who placed all their happiness in pleasure, and held nothing to be desirable but what delighted their senses : a doctrine which made them rather swine than men. And also with the Stoics, who placed all happiness in want of passion, denied all freedom of will, and ascribed all events to an absolute and irrevocable fate. And having disputed with them, he preaches Christ crucified, risen, and glorified to them : but he seemeth a babbler to them, and a setter forth of strange gods. Whence learn, That Christ and his doctrine, the gospel, was the grand stumbling-block both to Jew and Gentile, learned and unlearned. St. Paul took most pains to convert Athens, yet here his success was least ; though it was a learned university, where, no doubt, were many men of excellent natural accomplishments. From whence we may infer, that if moral dispositions and improvement of natural abilities had fitted men for grace, we might

have expected the greatest number of converts at Athens, where many were mocking but very few believing. Surely the apostle's plantations there were different, not so much from the nature of the soil, as from the different influences of the Spirit. Observe, 5. How wonderfully the overruling providence of God concerned itself for the apostle's preservation here at Athens : they hauled him away to their high court of judicature, which sat upon Mars'-hill, (so called because the temple of Mars stood upon it,) where the most learned men assembled, and hear and determine what new god was to be worshipped. Here note, 1. How the providence of God brought St. Paul to a public place to preach in, Mars'-hill, where was a confluence of all the people, and a congregation of the most learned Gentile philosophers. This gave the apostle a mighty opportunity for the service of preaching. And, 2. note, How tenderly the apostle was treated in this cruel court : although this court had condemned Diogenes, Protagoras, and Socrates himself, for undervaluing their gods, and bringing in new deities ; yet the apostle's life is not only spared by these judges, but they speak candidly and kindly to the apostle, and court him to gratify their curiosity, by informing them of this novelty, which they were so inquisitive after, and desired to hear more of his divine discourse. Thus the Lord eminently shows, how the hearts of men are in his hand, and that without his permission all the bitter enemies of his church shall not move a tongue, nor lift up a finger, against any of his ministers and members.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars'-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

As if the apostle had said, " Ye men of Athens have a great number of gods, whom ye ignorantly worship : the God, therefore, whom ye acknowledge not to know, and yet profess to worship, is he that I preach unto you ; for as I passed up and down in your city, beholding your altars and images, I found an altar with this inscription, TO

THE UNKNOWN GOD." Here observe, 1. The light of nature discovered : the altar is inscribed, TO A GOD. The true God of the Jews was an unknown and uncertain God to the wisest of the Gentiles. Learn, That some discoveries of God may be made even by the light of nature : these heathens who had nothing but the dim light of nature to guide and direct them, do yet own a God, and acknowledge a worship due unto him, by the erection of an altar. Observe, 2, The darkness of nature declared : the altar, though erected to a God, yet it is to a God unknown. Thence learn, That natural light, in its most elevated and raised improvements, can make no full and saving discoveries of God. The true God was but an unknown God, even to the wisest of the heathens, to the men of Athens, who were the most famous, in their day, for the severest wisdom and gravity.

24 God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things ; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth ; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation ; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us : 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being ; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Here begins St. Paul's famous sermon to the men of Athens ; in which the first thing that occurs to our observation is, how the preacher doth adapt and accommodate his discourse to the capacity of his hearers, as also to their sentiments and opinions. His auditory consisted of philosophers, particularly of Epicureans and Stoics ; the former instead of a God and a wise Providence to make and govern the world, brought in *Fortune* or blind *Chance*, to bear all the sway. The latter though they acknow-

ledged a God, yet introduced a rigid fatality, as superior to the Deity, denying to man all freedom and liberty of choice. Accordingly, St. Paul addresses himself, first to prove a God and a Providence, to the exclusion both of *Fate* and *Fortune*; and then, secondly, from the very nature and notion of God, he infers the folly and absurdity of their Pagan superstition. Observe next, The apostle's arguments to prove the being of a God, and a Providence: 1. From the work of creation: *He made the world and all things therein; he giveth life, and breath, and all things.* The whole universe is his work, and he planted the earth, and replenished it with inhabitants. The invisible God is more visible in his creatures, and the being of God demonstrated from the formation of a world of creatures. From the formation of man in particular: *In him we live, and move, &c.* Here are three great benefits enjoyed by human nature; life, motion, and being, all derived from God, and demonstrating the being of God. 1. Life: this is valuable above all blessings, because it renders us capable of enjoying all blessings. 2. Motion: a great mercy, but little considered. How uncomfortable would life be without it! Were we staked down to the earth as trees, or did we move by a constant law of nature, as the sun and moon do move, it had been a favour beyond our desert; but to move as we do at pleasure, with choice and ease, to help ourselves, and to assist others, is at once a demonstration of God's being, and an evidence of his bounty. 3. Being: this is essential and necessary to none but God. To us it is an act of divine favour, and this being is a mercy; then being what we are, is a double mercy, that we do not creep and crawl upon the earth, as worms and toads, but are built high upon the earth, with wonderful wisdom and care; and that a soul, which is an immortal and an eternal being, inhabits within us; a being which shall continue when heaven and earth shall be consumed. Observe next, The apostle having proved the being of a God, next demonstrates the certainty of a divine Providence: *He hath determined the times that are fore-appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.* That is, God has, as it were, chalked out, and drawn a line, where the bounds and habitations, whither the dominions or possessions of men should be extended, and where they shall be confined. The common blessings of God are not dispensed without a special providence; and

the special providence of God, in upholding, disposing, and governing the world, doth as much prove the being of a God, as the general creation of it. Every hour's preservation is virtually a new creation, and both of them sufficient demonstrations of the divine being and bounty. Observe, lastly, The duty which the apostle infers on man's part, from all this goodness and bounty demonstrated on God's part; *That they shall seek the Lord, who shall find him, who is not far from every one of us.* It is the duty of all men to follow after God; that God hath made man, should draw men after God; inasmuch as we are his offspring, (ver. 29.) our hearts should spring and rise up to him in love and thankfulness; as the rivers, because they come from the sea, go back thither, so we being the offspring of God, and derived from him, should be always returning to him. And if it be the duty of all men to follow after God, because they have natural life, breath, and motion from him, how much more should the new creature, who has a spiritual life breathed into him and bestowed upon him, follow hard after God, in the enjoyment of whom his present happiness and future felicity doth consist? To follow God in his way, and to propose God as our end, contains the sum of all duty.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle quotes one of the heathen poets in this his divine discourse. This poet was Aratus; what he attributes to Jupiter, St. Paul applies to the true God; *We are his offspring.* Where note, For the honour of human learning, and the lawfulness of making use of it in our sermons, the Holy Ghost is pleased three several times in the New Testament to make mention of the heathen poets; of Aratus here, *Acts* xvii. 28. of Menander, *1 Cor.* xv. 33. of Epimenides, *Tit.* i. 12. Truth is God's wherever it is found; as a mine of gold is the king's, in whose ground soever it is discovered. Observe, 2. The force of the apostle's argument: seeing we are God's offspring: that is, seeing God is our Creator, we cannot suppose him to be the workmanship of our hands, as an image of gold, silver, or stone is; and consequently how irrational it is for a man to adore an

image made by his own hands, for and instead of God. Learn, That there is a strong propensity and inclination in the heart of man to the sin of idolatry. 2. That the sin of idolatry is not only a very great sin, but a very unreasonable and absurd sin; it is not only sacrilegious but silly, for a man to worship his own workmanship, and to fall down upon his knees to the work of his own hands.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

That is, "Though God of his infinite patience hath long borne with the world lying in darkness and ignorance; yet now, by causing his gospel to be preached to all nations, he calls and invites them to repentance, to forsake their idols, and to serve the true God." Here observe, 1. The censure of the past times: they were times of ignorance, and God winked at them, or overlooked them; not that God did allow or approve of their idolatry, but did not destroy and cut them off for the same; nor afford them such helps and means as now he did, having brought his gospel among them. Observe, 2. The duty of the present time declared: to repent. This is a commanded duty, and an universally commanded duty: *Now he commands all men every where to repent.* From the whole note, 1. That times of paganism were times of ignorance. 2. That it is an unspeakable misery to be born and brought up in such times. 3. That to live impenitently in times of knowledge, is a sin that God will by no means wink at. 4. That the great purpose and design of the gospel wheresoever it is sent and preached, is to invite men to repentance: *Now he commandeth all men every where to repent.*

31 Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

These words are an argument or motive to enforce the foregoing duty of repentance; God requires every man, every where, and that now immediately, to forsake their idols and sinful ways; because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Christ Jesus, of which he hath already given assurance, by

raising him from the dead. Where note, 1. A judgment to come asserted: He (that is, God) will judge the world; he that hath now an observing eye, will hereafter have a rewarding hand. Note, 2. That there not only is a judgment to come, but the day or time of it is determined and fixed: *He hath appointed a day.* As the precise time of Christ's first coming was fixed by an unalterable, though unknown, decree, so is also the time of his second coming; that not knowing the hour, we may be upon our watch every hour. Note, 3. That as the day of judgment is determined, so the person of the judge is also constituted and ordained: *He will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained.* This is an act of justice to our Saviour, that he, having humbled himself to take our nature, should, as the reward of his humiliation, judge that world which he died to save. And an act of kindness towards us, that he should be our judge, who took upon him our nature, and had so much love to us as to die for us. Had we leave to choose our own judge, what choice could we make better for ourselves, than that man whom God hath ordained? Observe, 4. The assurance which God hath given us of having Christ for our judge; namely, his raising him from the dead. But how doth that assure us of Christ being our judge? Answer, Our blessed Saviour, when he was in the world, often declared that he was appointed by God to judge the quick and the dead, and appealed to his resurrection as the great proof of what he said. Now when Almighty God did accordingly raise him in such a wonderful manner, (as we know he did,) what is it less than God's setting his seal to his commission, and openly proclaiming him to be the judge of all the world? Observe, 5. The manner of this judgment, or the measures which this judge will proceed by, at the great day; and that is, according to righteousness. *He will judge the world in righteousness.* Not in rigour and severity, taking all the advantages that power can give him; nor yet arbitrarily and upon prerogative, but according to known laws; nor yet partially with respect of persons; but every man's doom shall depend upon the holiness or unholiness of his heart and life. Farther, our Judge will candidly interpret men's actions, and make the very best of things that the case will bear; principally looking at the sincerity of men's intentions, and making all favourable allowances for their



failings and infirmities that can consist with justice ; and will distribute his rewards and happiness and glory to good men in the other world, in proportion to the measure of their difficulties and sufferings, which they meet with here in this world. Now having this high and full assurance of a judgment to come, let us seriously believe it, daily expect it, and duly prepare for it ; let neither profit tempt us, nor pleasure allure us, nor power embolden us, nor privacy encourage us, to do that thing which we cannot answer at the great tribunal. When St. Paul preached of judgment, Felix, though a Pagan, trembled at the sermon. Lord ! what shall we say to those worse than Pagan infidels amongst ourselves, who ridicule a judgment to come, and cry before-hand, God judge me ! yea, God damn me ! Alas, unhappy men, he will judge you sure enough ; and damn you soon enough, if a serious repentance prevent it not.

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked : and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*. 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed : among the which *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Here we have the success of Paul's sermon declared ; it was various and different : some of his hearers derided, others doubted, and a few believed. Those that derided and mocked, it is very probable, were Epicureans, who denied that the world was either created or governed by God ; as also that there were any rewards or punishments for men after death : therefore they ridiculed St. Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The sublimest doctrines, and most comfortable truths of the gospel are matter of derision and mockery to sensual minds. Those that doubted, probably were the Stoics, who did own the resurrection and a state of rewards and punishments in another world ; and therefore for obtaining better satisfaction to their doubts, desired to *hear* the apostle *again* discoursing farther of *that matter*. Those that believed are few indeed, if no more than are here mentioned, which are Dionysius and Damaris, with some others. Dionysius was a famous person, one of the great council, mentioned

ver. 19. whose conversion probably might afterwards have a great influence upon many others ; and it was no small honour and advantage to the gospel to be owned by such an honourable person as this Dionysius was : not many wise, not many noble, were called. Blessed be God that any were, that any are, that any of the great ones of the world stoop to the sceptre of Jesus Christ, and pay their homage and subjection to him.

Thus ends the apostle's divine sermon at the famous university of Athens, which yielded few, very few converts, to St. Paul : for we read of no church founded here, as we did before at Philippi, and in the next chapter at Corinth. What reason can be assigned but this, That these grave philosophers, profound scholars, venerable senators and citizens, who had a name for wisdom throughout the world, were too wise to be saved by the foolishness of preaching ! As the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, so the wisdom of God in the gospel is accounted foolishness by the wise men of the world ; according to that of the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 21. " When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God ; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

#### CHAP. XVIII.

**A**FTER these things, Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth :

The foregoing chapter acquainted us with the small success which St. Paul found of his ministry at Athens : upon his preaching Jesus and the resurrection there, the philosophers and wise men mocked and derided him. If natural dispositions and abilities had fitted men for grace, we might have expected the greatest number of converts at Athens, where many were mockers, but very few believers. Hereupon St. Paul leaves Athens, and goes to Corinth, a famous city in Achaia ; where he meets with more encouragement and better success ; for here he gathers a famous church, unto which he wrote two epistles, under the title of the First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla ; because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome ; and came unto them. 3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought : for by their occupation they were tent-makers.

The apostle being now come to Corinth, where he was altogether a stranger, and wanting money for his subsistence, the providence of God directed him to the house of Aquila and Priscilla ; who being of the same trade with himself, *tent-makers*, he works with his own hands to maintain himself, that he might not be burthensome to others. Here observe, 1. The occasion of Aquila's and Priscilla's coming to Corinth, with whom St. Paul lodged. The Roman emperor Claudius had banished them from Italy and Rome, ver. 2. *Claudius commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome*. Thence note, That a wicked world is soon weary of the saints of God, and longs to worm them out of their cities and societies, never considering that their own preservation from ruin is for the saints' sake ; as the alleys in a garden are watered for the sake of the flowers, which otherwise would lie dry. Observe, 2. That the apostle had learned a trade, tent-making, before he was called to the ministry, and he wrought upon it occasionally after he was a minister. The most learned among the Jews did always learn some handicraft trade, it being a tradition amongst them, " That he that doth not learn his child a trade, teaches him to be a thief." So that although their children were designed for students, yet they did learn some trade. Accordingly St. Paul having learned to make tents, (much used in those hot countries, by soldiers and others, to keep off the violence of the weather,) he works at Corinth, upon his trade for his own subsistence. Men separated to the ministry of the gospel, may upon an exigency labour for their living ; not but that the apostle had power and sufficient warrant to challenge maintenance for his preaching, as he often intimates in his epistles ; but there was not yet any church at Corinth to maintain him ; and when there was, they were mostly of the poorer and meaner sort of people, and he would give them a convincing demonstra-

tion that he sought not theirs, but them. He demands therefore no maintenance, lest it should hinder the success of his ministry ; but being of the same trade with Aquila and Priscilla, he takes up his lodging with them at Corinth, and works at their trade.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. 5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. 6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads : I am clean ; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

Observe here, How vehemently desirous the holy apostle was to plant a christian church at Corinth, and to bring the Jews of Corinth to embrace the gospel : *He was pressed in spirit, and testified*, that is, reasoned with them with great vehemency and earnestness of affection, as well as with great judgment, concerning the Messias. Observe, 2. That the Jewish synagogue at Corinth was the preaching place that St. Paul made choice of, hoping to gather the beginnings of his christian church out of the converted Jews : *He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath-day*. Still the apostle kept to his commission, to preach the gospel first to the Jews, and afterwards, upon their rejection, to the Gentiles. Observe, 3. The blasphemous opposition which the Jews made to the doctrine of the gospel : *They opposed themselves, and blasphemed* ; that is, they opposed his doctrine, reviled his person, and blasphemed Christ, whom that apostle preached. Observe, 4. How the holy apostle clears himself of the blood of those Jews, whom he had now preached the gospel unto : *He said, Your blood be upon your own heads ; I am clean*. The faithful ministers of Christ shall never have the blood of a perishing people laid to their charge ; they having warned them of their damnable state, and discovered the way of life and salvation to them, deliver their own souls ; whilst the people which they preached to, die in their sins, and for their sins.

7 And he departed thence and en-

tered into a certain man's house; named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. 8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized. 9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid; but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. 11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Observe here, 1. That the opposition which St. Paul met with while he lodged in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, moved him to change his quarters, and betake himself to a new lodging: he goes into the house of Justus, by birth a Gentile, but a Jewish proselyte, whose house joined nigh to the synagogue where St. Paul's preaching-work lay, to such as would be willing to hear him. Observe, 2. The good success which the apostle had in his preaching at Corinth: Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, and his household, were brought to believe, and were baptized; after whose example, many of the people in Corinth believed also. Rulers and great men are looking-glasses, in the places where they live, by which many dress themselves. Observe, 3. That notwithstanding this good success which St. Paul had at Corinth, he seems, through human frailty, to be possessed with fear, and under an apprehension of danger from the Jews, and accordingly has thoughts of leaving the city; against which fears God antidotes him with a gracious promise of his presence with him: *Be not afraid, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.* Hence learn, 1. That the best and holiest of God's saints and servants are sometimes under sad and slavish fears, and prone to be discouraged, when they meet with difficulties in the way of their duty. 2. That the promise and assurance of God's gracious presence with them, will raise them up above their fears, and be a sufficient encouragement to them, for their abiding in any place, and amongst any people, let the difficulty or danger be what it will: *Be*

*not afraid, for I am with thee, and none shall hurt thee.* Observe, 4. A farther encouragement given by God to the apostle, to continue his ministry still at Corinth. *I have much people in this city.* That is, Here are many souls whom I design effectually to call and bring home by thy ministry: accordingly the apostle continued his ministry among them a year and six months. Learn hence, That although the ingratitude and perverseness of a people do sadly discourage their ministers, and tempt them to remove from them, yet God encourages them to their duty; that for the malice of some, the salvation of others may not be neglected. 2. That no opposition must discourage the ministers of God in the way of their duty; God's servants must not suffer themselves to be outdone by the devil's slaves, but bear down all opposition made against them, with patience and joyfulness. And notwithstanding all the malicious opposition made by the Jews against the apostle, yet did he continue a year and six months to preach at Corinth. Christ had a great harvest a-ripening in that city, to be reaped by the apostle's ministry; and being encouraged with the promise of his protecting presence, he committed himself to the divine care, and the Lord both preserved and succeeded him.

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat, 13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you. 15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. 16 And he drave them from the judgment-seat. 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Observe here, 1. How St. Paul, taking heart from the foregoing promise made by

God unto him, goes on courageously in the work of his ministry at Corinth; but the unbelieving Jews were so enraged against him, that they combined together as one man, and *with one accord made insurrection against Paul*. Where note, What great unity and unanimity there is among wicked men, the devil's friends; he well knows that his kingdom could not long stand if it were divided. The unity of all society is their strength. Observe, 2. They accuse the apostle before Gallio the deputy, for persuading men to worship God contrary to the law of Moes. Who would not think but these men were truly pious, virtuous, and good, who were so zealous for the worship of God according to the law? and yet were they wicked men, and fiery persecutors. There is a noisy religion in the world; some men think, by crying the Church! the Church! and by pleading loud for the worship of God, as established by law, to atone for all their immoralities. Praying is good, hearing and receiving the sacrament are good, if they be joined with holy walking; but if otherwise, the howling of wolves is as acceptable to Almighty God, as the prayers of those men who call Christ Master, and the church mother, but do not the things which they have commanded; yea, the very dogs which follow them to the public assemblies, shall as soon find acceptance as themselves, if they do not obey him whom they pretend to adore. It is no matter what church a wicked man is of, for it is certain he can be saved in none. Observe, 3. What low and mean thoughts Gallio had, and all persons prejudiced against religion and the power of godliness have, of sincere christianity: *If it be a question of words and names*, says Gallio. As if he had said, "Do not trouble me about the niceties of your religion, decide such questions among yourselves; for I will be no judge in such matters." The great men of the world little care to trouble their heads about the matters of religion; they look upon it only as a matter of notion and speculation; whereas it is not a *speculative science*, but a *practical art of holy living*: and accordingly, like Gallio, they care for none of these things. Observe, lastly, That although this Gallio had no kindness for christianity, yet God made use of him as an instrument, at this time, to preserve and screen St. Paul from the rage of his enemies, inasmuch, that *he drove his accusers from the judgment-seat*. Thus

God performed his promise to Paul, *suffering no man to hurt him*; but causing Gallio the governor to defend him, who his enemies were in hopes would have destroyed him. Lord, how happy and wise is it for thy servants to *commit the care of themselves to thee in well-doing*! If we, with a purity of intention, concern ourselves for thy glory, thou wilt certainly take care of our safety; or if any danger should come, danger itself shall do us no harm.

18 And Paul *after this tarried there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria: and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not: 21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. 22 And when he had landed at Cesarea, and gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. 23 And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed, and went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all his disciples.

A farther account is here given of the laborious travels of the great apostle St. Paul; namely, from Corinth to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Cesarea, from Cesarea to Antioch, &c. Where observe, 1. That St. Paul having continued a year and a half at Corinth, and planted a church there, which yet soon after sadly degenerated; he determines now to sail to Ephesus; and accordingly at Cenchrea, a haven near to that city, *he shaved his head, for he had a vow*: that is, the vow of a Nazarite, which he (that is, Aquila, say some; St. Paul, say others) had before taken upon him for a time, whereby he was obliged to abstain from wine, and shaving his head, and touching of the dead. But having now ac-

complished his vow, he shore his head, and returned to the common way of living; where the wisdom and moderation of this great apostle, in complying in indifferent things, is to be noted and imitated: *To the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews.* He willingly complied with their weakness, to show that he was no contemner of their law; for which reason he caused Timothy to be circumcised, and purified himself in the temple at Jerusalem: and behold the success of this his compliance; for, by gratifying the Jews in this condescension to the prescription of the law, he brought over very many of them to the faith of Christ. Let not any suspect this for a sinful compliance with the Jews, in observing a ceremony which the gospel had abolished, nor censure it for a low and mean stoop in so great a man to the humour of the people; for though the ceremonial rites died with Christ, yet they were a long time in burying, and the Jews were indulged in the observation of them till they came to a clearer sight of their christian liberty; accordingly the apostle yielded to them for the present in indifferent things, without dissimulation or blame. Observe, 2. The apostle being now come to Ephesus, he taught in the synagogue of the Jews, and reasoned with them. Where we may note, both how close the apostle kept to his commission, in first preaching the word of life to the Jews, and also the fervent love which he bare to his own countrymen, whom though he had suffered all manner of indignities from, yet doth he give them precept upon precept, line upon line; and, with an unwearied diligence, dispenses the word of life and salvation to them. Observe, 3. Our apostle stays not long at Ephesus, but hastens to Jerusalem to keep the feast there, namely, the feast of the passover; not that he took himself obliged to observe the feasts, or any of the antiquated ceremonies: but because of the vast concourse which he knew would be at Jerusalem at the time of the feast from all quarters, and which would give him an opportunity to make Christ known to a great multitude. The ministers of the gospel, without the imputation of vain-glory, or seeking popular applause, may warrantably desire, and occasionally lay hold upon, an opportunity of dispensing the word to a numerous auditory, in hope that casting the net among many, they may inclose some. Observe, lastly, The incessant care, indefatigable diligence, and unwearied pains,

of this great apostle, in travelling from place to place, and at such great distances, to preach the everlasting gospel to lost sinners. From Ephesus he sails to Cesarea, from Cesarea to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Antioch, from Antioch to Galatia and Phrygia. See how the care of all the churches was upon him, and how he laboured more abundantly than they all. Lord, what a pattern is here of ministerial diligence and faithfulness! What pains did St. Paul take! What hazards did he run, in planting and propagating the gospel of Christ! In labours more abundant, in sufferings above measure! Well might he say, *I am able to do all things through Christ that strengthens me.* And blessed be God, the same power that assisted him, stands ready to succour us; and if ever he calls us to extraordinary service, he will come in with more than ordinary strength.

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. Whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. 27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

The first thing here observable, is, How the wisdom of God provided for the several churches, that in the absence of one powerful preacher they were supplied with another; when the providence of God called St. Paul from Ephesus and Corinth, it brought Apollos thither: so that what Paul planted, Apollos watered. The judicious Calvin, upon the place, piously admires the providence of God over his church, in not

suffering it to be without a settled minister; but upon the removal of one, to raise up another. Observe, 2. How admirably qualified Apollos was for the work of the gospel, and excellently fitted and furnished for the places he was called to, Ephesus and Corinth, famous for philosophers and orators; accordingly he is a man of ravishing eloquence, who, by his profound knowledge in the sacred scriptures, was both apt to teach the truth, and able to maintain it. Hence learn, That scripture knowledge is the choicest qualification and highest commendation of a gospel minister. *Apollos, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures*: without this, he can never truly and savingly make known and discover Jesus Christ: without this, he can never rightly divide the word of truth; without this, he can never convince gainsayers, either gainsayers in opinion, or gainsayers in practice; without this, he can never instruct the people fully in their duty, nor declare to them the whole council of God. Observe, 3. The great humility of Apollos: although he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, yet he did not disdain farther instruction. Those that are most knowing, if humble, are most sensible of their ignorance: the knowledge of the best, while they are on this side heaven, is capable of improvements. Apollos knew much, yet Aquila and Priscilla farther enlightened him, so that he knew more. An humble man will be content to learn of the meanest woman. These poor tent-makers, Aquila and his wife Priscilla, catechize the great Apollos, and add something to the treasure of his knowledge. Observe, 4. The place where Apollos preached: in the Jewish synagogue, ver. 26. *He began to speak boldly in the synagogue*. It was a custom among the Jews to allow a liberty for learned men, though no priests, to teach in the synagogues. Thus Paul, though of the tribe of Benjamin, and not of the tribe of Levi, was permitted to preach in their synagogues, as we read throughout this book of the *Acts*. In like manner we find Apollos here preaching in the synagogue: *Non ut habens auctoritatem sed scientiam*, says Estius; taking the advantage of that indulgence which the Jews gave him in their synagogues, to preach and spread the doctrine of Christ. Observe, lastly, That this Apollos afterwards became an eminent authorized preacher in the church of Corinth, and is called St. Paul's helper and brother; and when he came to Corinth, was so emi-

nent, that he proved the head of a sect and faction: *One saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos*. And here at Ephesus he mightily convinced the Jews, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

## CHAP. XIX.

AND it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, That they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And all the men were about twelve.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter informed us how Apollos was employed at Corinth: the beginning of this acquaints us how St. Paul spent his time at Ephesus. He finds there twelve disciples, he catechizes them, lays his hand upon them, and God confers the gift of the Holy Ghost. Here observe, 1. The question put by St. Paul to the twelve disciples: *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* He doth not mean in its sanctifying operations, but in its miraculous gifts; as speaking with tongues, the gift of prophecy, and the gift of healing. Observe, 2. The disciples' answer, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*; not that they were ignorant of the essence or person of the Holy Ghost; but had not heard of the effusion of the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; for it was a received opinion among the Jews, that after the death of Haggai, Zecha-

riah, and Malachi, the Holy Ghost, or the spirit of prophecy, departed from Israel. And they never heard that he was returned, or of his being given anew with his miraculous gifts. Observe, 3. How the apostle sets them right; they tell him they were baptized into John's baptism. The apostle tells them, that John's baptism and Christ's were the same for substance, and had both the same end, though they differed in some circumstances. The disciples of John believed in Christ to come, the disciples of Jesus believed in Christ as already come, and were baptized in that faith; and the ordinance sealed unto both the remission of sins. Yet it being essential to christian baptism, to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, (thereby professing ourselves to be buried and risen with Christ,) and John's baptism having not this; when the disciples heard that, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, that is, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is the essence of christian baptism. Observe, 4. How the apostle lays his hands upon these disciples, to confirm them in the faith they were baptized into; whereupon the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were immediately conferred on them, and they spake divers tongues, which before they understood not, and were endued with the gift of prophesying; that is, of declaring things to come, and interpreting the writings of the prophets, that they may be fit to teach and instruct others. Hence learn, That at the first planting and propagating of the gospel, the wisdom of God thought fit to furnish the preachers and dispensers of it with extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers, to qualify them for, and to give them assurance of, the success of their ministry; and also to assure those whom they preached unto, that their doctrine was from heaven. Almighty God never setting the seal of his omnipotence to a lie. Such miraculous gifts are long since ceased in the church, the cause of them, and the occasion for them, being long since ceased.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he depart-

ed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 19 And this continued by the space of two years: so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

St. Paul being now come to Ephesus with a design to stay there for some considerable time; as the manner was, he enters into the synagogue, and preaches the gospel first to the Jews, and this for the space of three months; but when, instead of embracing of the gospel, they opposed it, blaspheming Christ the author, and the apostle the dispenser of it, and vehemently contending with him for preaching the gospel, (which some conceive he calls his *fighting with beasts at Ephesus*, 1 Cor. xv. 32.) he left the Jews and their synagogue, separating the christians that were in Ephesus from them, whom he daily instructed in a certain place, called *the school of Tyrannus*. Here note, 1. The vehemency of St. Paul's affection to his own countrymen the people of the Jews, notwithstanding all the opposition they made against his doctrine, and the virulent reproaches which they cast upon his person: he continues to preach in their synagogue at Ephesus for three months without ceasing; thereby keeping close to his commission, which was to preach the gospel first to the Jews, and, upon their rejection of it, to tender the word of *life* unto the *Gentiles*. Note, 2. As great an apostle and as faithful a minister as St. Paul was, yet he wanted to see the success of his labours. Many of his hearers at Ephesus believed not his word, but were hardened under it. The same sun that softens the wax, hardens the clay: the same doctrine of the gospel becomes the savour of death unto some, which is the savour of life unto others. Woe be unto that people, who by their habitual hardness, through their actual resisting the impressions of God's word, do provoke the Almighty to superadd judicial hardness of heart unto them, making their sin to be-

come their punishment. Note, 3. How upon this opposition, which St. Paul met with in the Jewish synagogue, he leaves it, and retires to a more private place, the school of Tyrannus, where he had more freedom, and less opposition. Learn hence, That such places of public worship, where nothing but contradiction to the pure christian doctrine can be met with, may be lawfully withdrawn from. The apostle separates himself and the disciples from the Jews' synagogue, where he had preached three months, meeting only with contradiction to his doctrine, and blasphemy against his dear Redeemer. Note, 4. How it pleased God to confirm St. Paul's ministry at Ephesus by his working miracles: and the miracles he wrought were *special*, that is, very extraordinary, inasmuch that even handkerchiefs or aprons having but touched St. Paul's body, and being brought unto the diseased, became a miraculous means both to cure diseases and to cast out devils. Thus, according to our Saviour's promise, his apostles did greater miracles than himself, *John* xiv. 12. not greater in regard of the manner, but in regard of the matter of them: Christ wrought his miracles in his own name, and by his own power; but the apostles wrought theirs in the name and by the power of Christ; yet it ought to be observed and considered, that although it pleased God, at the first plantation of the gospel by the apostles, to confirm christianity by many special miracles, (as new-set plants are well watered, till they have taken fast rooting,) yet that church which wants miracles may be a true church: because, 1. There is no promise made in the scriptures to the church for her perpetual enjoying the gift of miracles. That promise, *Mark* xvi. 17, *These signs shall follow them that believe, &c.* was only a temporary promise. 2. We are forbidden to expect miracles, *John* iv. 48. and forbidden to trust to miracles without scripture, or to regard such miracles as are wrought to confirm any doctrine that is contrary to scripture, *Deut.* xiii. 3. because the miracles of the last times are declared to be the signs of Antichrist, *2 Thess.* ii. 9, 10. From all which it follows, that miracles are no infallible note of the true church, as the Papists would make it; who also produce St. Paul's handkerchiefs here, and St. Peter's shadow, *Acts* v. 15. as a warrant for their superstitious relics; but the text assures us, it was God that wrought the special miracles, not St. Paul, nor his

handkerchiefs, but God by his hand. The miracles in the church of Rome, pretended to be wrought by the relics of saints and martyrs, are no better than lying wonders.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14 And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. 19 Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. 20 So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.

Here observe, 1. That we read not of any in the Old Testament that were bodily possessed with devils and evil spirits: but, in the New Testament, we meet with many both in our Saviour's time and also in the apostles', to the intent that the power of Christ might more signally appear in their ejection and casting out. Observe, 2. How some of the Jewish exorcists, like our jugglers, who make it their trade to wander up and down, to get a livelihood by pretending to cure diseases, and cast out devils, seeing what great miracles Paul had wrought in the name of Jesus, attempted to cast a devil out of a possessed man, by using the same name, though in Jesus they believed not. But Satan was so far from obeying them, that he made the possessed man fall violently upon them and wound



them. Thence learn, 1. That Satan scorns all human attempts, as weak and impotent, and is conquered only by a divine power; *Jesus I know; but who are ye?* Learn, 2. That the devil would gladly be God's ape. The Jewish jugglers would by all means imitate the apostles in casting out devils; accordingly they use the name of Jesus as a charm; but saying the same word with the apostles signified nothing, without exercising the same faith and grace. These exorcists soon found that words without faith would not work to cast out devils, and that Christ would not give power to his name when used as a charm. Learn, 3. That the devil, by God's permission, has power over those who profane the name of Christ. Satan here was too hard for these conjurers; he rushes upon them, and masters them, tears their clothes, wounds their bodies, and, had not God restrained him, had unavoidably destroyed them. Satan's malice is infinite, but his power is limited and bounded. Lord! abate his power, since his malice cannot be abated. Observe, lastly, How this execution of divine vengeance wrought wonderfully for the conviction and conversion both of Jews and Greeks, ver. 18. *Many believed, and came and confessed their sinful deeds.* And as an evidence of their detestation of their former faults and follies, they make a bonfire of all their magical books; burning so many of them, as the learned say, the price amounted to eight hundred pounds. Thus these conjurers evidenced themselves to be real converts, by plucking out their right eye, and cutting off their right hand; that is, sacrificing their bosom and best beloved lust and corruption. Thence learn, That there is no better evidence of the truth of a person's conversion, than cheerfully to part with a very profitable and pleasing lust.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. 23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. 24 For a certain man

named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; 25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth: 26 Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: 27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. 28 And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians! 29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

Observe here, 1. How angry the devil grows at the success of the gospel, mentioned in the foregoing verses; there we read how the whole college of diabolical conjurers were brought over, by the apostles' preaching at Ephesus, to burn their books, and leave their wicked course of life. Hereupon the devil bestirs him, and raises a persecution against the apostle. Those that will disturb Satan in the quiet and peaceable possession of his kingdom, shall be sure to meet with trouble and disquiet from him. Let not any of the saints of God in general, nor any of the faithful and zealous ministers of Christ in particular, expect any long continuance of their outward tranquillity and peace in this world, where they are every day up in arms against Satan, and meditating the ruin of him and his kingdom; for which he will certainly seek revenge. Observe, 1. The instruments which the devil employs to raise the storm of persecution against the apostle, namely, Demetrius the silversmith, and his craftsmen; they looking upon St. Paul as one

that impaired their profit, and spoiled their trade of making silver shrines for Diana's temple, by his crying down the worship of idols. "But what were their silver shrines, made for Diana's temple?" *Answer*, The temple of Diana was at that time one of the seven famous structures of the world; and the silver shrines made by these silversmiths, were certain models or images of this temple, wherein their idol goddess Diana was set forth; which shrines, or portable temples, all the people of Asia carried about with them, to stir up the more their own devotions towards this idol. So that this shrine-making must needs be a very gainful trade, when all Asia was addicted to this superstition. No wonder then that Demetrius, upon the sight of the loss of his gain, made an horrible outcry, and set the city in an uproar: for carnal men, whose gain is their god and their godliness, account themselves undone when their god Mammon is in danger. If you take away their gods, what have they more? Learn hence, That gain-getting, and maintaining of men's livelihood, are mighty temptations to carnal men, to use impious means for supporting superstition and idolatry. Observe, 3. The arguments which Demetrius used to stir up the people against the apostle; and they are three, 1. The plea of profit, *By this craft we get our gain*: if this man's doctrine obtain, our trade will quickly fall under disgrace, and die. This was the most cogent, the most pungent argument, that could be used; for, though an argument drawn from our own interest is not the most weighty, yet usually it is the most persuasive. 2. The pretence of piety: not only are we like to lose our livelihood, but our religion too; *Our goddess Diana* will be despised, her temple profaned, and her worshippers scorned. This easily heated the rabble's blood, put the multitude into a ferment, and caused an hideous outcry for two hours together, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*. 3. The plea of the antiquity and universality, and the common consent of all worshippers: *Diana, whom all Asia, and the world worshippeth*. As if Demetrius had said, "What! shall we suffer the temple of Diana to be set at naught by the preachments of this babbling Paul; a place so magnificent for structure, being some say one hundred, others two hundred and twenty years, a building; so renowned for the oracles of the gods, so magnified for the image that fell down from Jupiter, so

honoured by the oblations of the Asiatic potentates, and crowded with the devotions of the Ephesians, and admired throughout the whole world?" Lord! what danger was the life of the great apostle now in! how did this popular tumult threaten the present destruction of him and his companions, Gaius and Aristarchus! Now is supposed to be the time when the apostle says, *That after the manner of men he had fought with beasts at Ephesus*: and this is probably the deliverance which he gratefully commemorates in 2 Cor. i. 10. *Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us*.

30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. 31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. 32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. 33 But they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. 34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*.

Observe here, 1. The undaunted courage of St. Paul in the cause of Christ: he resolves to adventure his life, by going into the theatre, there to make an apology for himself and his companions, and in defence of the christian religion. He did not account his life dear unto him, but was willing not only to be bound, but to die for the name of Jesus. Observe, 2. How the divine Providence is to be admired, and awfully adored, in directing to ways and means for the apostle's preservation in this time of imminent danger. God now made use of the advice, not only of the apostle's fast friends, *the disciples*, but of his foes, that is, certain of the people at Asia, who were now become his friends, to dissuade

him from going into the theatre, lest he should have been torn in pieces by an outrageous rabble of insolent idolaters in this unaccountable uproar. It is all one with God to save by many or by few, by friends or by foes: for he can make enemies become benefactors at his pleasure, and command deliverance for his people, sometimes without means, sometimes by weak and contemptible means, sometimes by improbable and unlikely means, sometimes by opposite and contrary means. Lord! who would not trust thee in a time of imminent or impending danger, who hast all created nature at thy beck, the hearts of all in thy hands, the tongues and hands of the most unruly and outrageous in thy power; and wilt deliver thine in six troubles, and in seven, and there shall no evil touch them! Thou canst and wilt deliver as often as thy children need deliverance, and save them from evil, even when they are in the midst of trouble! Observe, 3. How the rabble at Ephesus treated Alexander being in the theatre, (the place where they judged offenders, and cast them to the wild beasts :) they would not suffer him to make any defence for himself, or the people of the Jews. This Alexander is supposed by many to be that Alexander, who St. Paul afterwards told Timothy did him much evil: if so, we find here he was first a proselyte, then a professor, next a confessor, almost a martyr; yet, after all, an apostate; making shipwreck of the faith, for which he was excommunicated by the apostle, 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. *Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan.* This excommunication of the apostle probably was the provocation that occasioned him to do so much mischief to the apostle, of which he complains, 2 Tim. 14. *Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; of whom be thou ware also.* Learn thence, 1. That it was possible for a glorious professor to turn a furious persecutor. This Alexander did not only withstand the apostle's person, but his doctrine also; for which being excommunicated, he sought revenge. Learn, 2. That excommunication not only angers, but enrages wicked and impenitent men; so that, instead of being reformed, they seek revenge: yet must the censures of the church be executed and inflicted without either fear or favour.

35 And when the town-clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye

men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. 37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. 38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. 39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. 40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. 41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Observe here, 1. The instrument which God stirs up to stem the tide, and to stop the stream, of this hair-brained assembly; and that is, *the town-clerk*, who was always present at their public meetings, and registered all their city acts. His presence and eloquence God made use of, to appease this tumult, to preserve the apostle, and to dismiss the assembly. Observe, 2. The town-clerk's oration was full of craft and policy, of fraud and fallacy; for he tells the multitude, that St. Paul and his friends are against images only that are made with hands; whereas theirs was not such, but one that fell down from Jupiter. It was his duty, by office, to appease the rabble's rage, with reason and authority; he ought not to have done it fallaciously. But we must consider he was a Pagan, and his design was only to still the people; accordingly, he encourages the credulous multitude to believe what the crafty priests had insinuated into them, that the image which they worshipped was not made with hands; but fell immediately down from heaven; hoping thereby to gain more veneration to their idols, and get more pounds into their own purses. Thus God made

use of the worldly and (somewhat) wicked eloquence of this heathen to preserve St. Paul. Observe, 3. How God opens the mouth of this man to vindicate the apostle's innocence and his companions' also; *These men, saith he, are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.* It is very likely, that the apostle and the christians in Ephesus had in wisdom asserted christianity, without saying much against Diana, which would have but enraged the multitude; much less did they offer any violence either to her temple or her image. Here note, That although the apostles were great enemies to these men's idolatry, yet did they offer no outward violence to their idol-temples, neither to demolish them, or deface any image in them: they well knew, that such a work of public reformation was not their business, but the magistrates'; therefore they endeavoured by preaching to cast idols out of the people's hearts, but not by violence to throw them out of the temple. Thus ends this chapter, with the account of St. Paul's marvellous, if not miraculous preservation at the city of Ephesus; where being surrounded with difficulties and dangers on all hands, yet being found in the way of his duty, and in the work of his master, he escapes all perils. Safety evermore accompanies duty: when we are in God's way, we are under God's wing: preservation and protection we shall have, if God may thereby be more glorified; but sometimes danger is better than safety, a storm more useful than a calm. And blessed be God for the assurance of his promise, that all things, be they mercies or afflictions, comforts or corrections, dangers or deliverances, life or death, all shall work together for good to them that love God, and are found steadfast in their obedience to him. *Rom. viii. 28.*

#### CHAP. XX.

**A**ND after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia. 2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, 3 And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Mace-

donia. 4 And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These going before, tarried for us at Troas.

The foregoing chapter acquaints us with a very great and imminent danger which the apostle escaped at Ephesus, where he had like to have been torn in pieces by those heathenish idolaters; which gave him occasion to say, 1 Cor. xv. 32. *That after the manner of men he had fought with beasts at Ephesus.* In this chapter we find, that the apostle, yielding to the fury of his persecutors, prudently withdraws from Ephesus into Macedonia: yet not so much for his own safety, (for he was willing to die Christ's sacrifice, if he might live no longer Christ's servant,) as for the church's future advantage, that the disciples in Ephesus might be no farther persecuted upon his account. Hence learn, That the ministers of the gospel may depart from a place and people, where their ministry has been very successful, when driven from thence by the fury of persecution. Thus St. Paul here obeyed the command of Christ elsewhere: *When they persecute you in one city, flee to another,* Matt. x. 23. Observe, 2. Though St. Paul withdrew from Ephesus, to allay the fury of persecution there; yet he left Timothy behind, to confirm and comfort the disciples, as his substitute, and to strengthen them in the faith of the gospel, 1 Tim. i. 3. *I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, &c.* Observe, 3. The apostle no sooner escapes the fury of the Heathens at Ephesus, but he is in danger of his life at Macedonia, by his own countrymen the Jews, ver. 3. *The Jews laid wait for him.* Well might the apostle say, he was in *deaths often, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils among false brethren,* 2 Cor. 11, 26. The wicked Jews, when they could not prevail against St. Paul by open force, contrive his ruin by secret treachery; but God gave him knowledge of their designs, and he avoided them, by turning another way. Thence learn, That it is high presumption, and a bold tempting of God, to run headlong upon evident and imminent dangers; and not to improve all lawful means we can to prevent and decline them. To trust to

means, is to neglect God ; but to neglect the means for our own preservation, is to tempt God. St. Paul would not tempt God by running into dangers, though his cause was never so good. Observe, 4. The persons are mentioned by name who accompanied the apostle, and administered unto him ; to wit, Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus, Gaius and Timotheus, Ty-chicus and Trophimus ; these accompanied the apostle, not out of state, but for necessary service : to which may be added St. Luke ; but, being the penman of this book, he declines mentioning of himself by name, though his praise will for ever be in the gospel, and ecclesiastical story.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days, where we abode seven days. 7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow ; and continued his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. 9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep : and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him, said, Trouble not yourselves : for his life is in him. 11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

The next journey of St. Paul is from Macedonia in Greece, to Troas in Asia, where he abode seven days. During his stay here, several things are to be remarked and observed. Observe here, 1. How this great apostle became all things to all men, though he would not become sin to any man : *To the Jews he became as a Jew,*

for he stayed his journey all the seven days of the Jewish Passover solemnity, and would not set forth to travel that time, because he would not offend the weak Jews ; accordingly he sailed not from Philippi till after the days of unleavened bread. Thus did St. Paul comply with the Jewish rites, which, though dead by the death of Christ, yet were not buried ; and therefore his compliance was not sinful, but managed with design to gain the Jews. Observe, 2. That the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, was of apostolical observation now, as it was before of Christ's institution ; on this day the Lord arose, on this day the disciples met, and Christ honoured them with his presence, John xx. on this day the collection for poor saints was made, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Now this necessarily infers the abrogation of the Saturday sabbath : for six days they were commanded to labour, and if they rested the seventh day, and first too, they violated the law of God, which we cannot suppose they did ; and consequently the apostles and primitive christians observed the first day of the week in remembrance of the work of redemption, as the Jews of old observed the seventh in remembrance of the work of creation. Observe, 3. The fervent zeal and unwearied diligence of the great apostle for the souls of men ; and also the patience and complacency with which his auditors attended upon his sermon at this time : *Paul preached till midnight*, ver. 7. A very long sermon upon a particular occasion is neither unscriptural nor unapostolical. We do not find that either the apostle was weary, or the auditory drowsy, at the dead time of the night ; their wakefulness at midnight under a sermon, condemns our sleepiness at mid-day. Observe, 4. The pious and prudential care which the apostle and his hearers took that their night-meeting should not fall under any calumny, or their selves reproached, for doing any thing indecently in the dead of the night ; to prevent this, the 8th verse informs us, that *there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together* ; exposing themselves, and what they did, to the view of all. Religious meetings in the night season are not only lawful in times of persecution, but necessary ; yet a special care ought to be taken to avoid all occasion of calumny, that the least suspicion may not arise, concerning the honesty and holiness of those that do

assemble at such unreasonable times. Observe, 5. What a warning the Holy Ghost here leaves upon record for such as sleep under the preaching of the word : Eutychus, when asleep under St. Paul's long sermon, falls down from the third loft, and is taken up dead. Here note, The time when he was overtaken with sleep : not at noon-day, but at midnight ; and it was not a sermon of an hour long that he was asleep under, but after St. Paul had preached several hours. This is not the case of our common sermon sleepers, who at noon-day sleep under the word ; nay, settle and compose themselves to sleep, and do what they can to invite sleep to them ! What if with Eutychus any of them fall down dead ! here is no Paul to raise them up ; or, what if this wretched contempt of the word provoke God to say, *Sleep on*, and be so stupefied that no ordinances shall awake you ! *Sleep on*, till hell flames awake you ! Observe, 6. Eutychus is raised to life by a miraculous power communicated to St. Paul, which was matter of great consolation to the spirits, and great confirmation to the faith, of the disciples, ver. 12. *They brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted* ; not only for the young man's sake, but especially for their own sakes : for hereby God gave a convincing testimony to the word of his grace, — God did hereby bear witness to it, and many were thereby confirmed in the belief of it.

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul : for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. 14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. 15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios. And the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium ; and the next day we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia ; for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Here an account is given of several travel of the apostle ; namely, from Troas to

Assos, from thence to Mitylene, next day to Samos, then to Trogyllium, and the day following to Miletus, passing by and not touching at Ephesus ; for the apostle having an earnest desire to be at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, so that he might in that concourse have a larger opportunity of spreading the gospel, he would not now call at Ephesus, lest he should be detained too long by the brethren there. From the whole note, 1. The indefatigable diligence of this great apostle, and his unwearied industry in the service of the gospel ; how he travels from place to place, and here from Troas to Assos, on foot all alone by land ; he did not affect to ride with a pompous train and retinue, but he goes on foot, expecting to meet with more opportunity of sowing the seed of the gospel as he passed through towns and villages by land, among those he conversed with ; so intent was this holy man upon the work of winning souls ; whereas had he travelled by sea, this opportunity had been lost. An happy example for all the ministers of Christ, to prefer an opportunity of doing good to the souls of others, before their own ease or profit. Note, 2. The true reason why St. Paul was so very desirous to be at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost : not that he placed any religion in observing this abrogated feast, but because that vast concourse of people at such times would give him a fairer opportunity to glorify Christ, and to propagate the gospel. This made him so desirous to get to Jerusalem by the feast of Pentecost. Learn thence, that the ministers of Christ, without the imputation of vain-glory, or seeking popular applause, may warrantably desire, and occasionally lay hold upon, an opportunity of dispensing a word to a numerous auditory, in hopes that, casting the net of the gospel among many, they may inclose some.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. 18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews : 20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed

you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The foregoing verses acquainted us how very intent St. Paul was upon his journey to Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, he hoping then and there to have a precious opportunity for preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified, to his countrymen the Jews: now, lest he should be hindered in his expedition, he determines to slip by Ephesus, without touching there; but could not satisfy himself without seeing of, and speaking to, the ministers of Ephesus, whom for that purpose he sends for to Miletus, and there in a grave and pious discourse, which warmed their hearts, and melted them into tears, he takes his farewell of them. Here note, 1. That St. Paul speaks much in his own vindication, but nothing by way of ostentation. A minister, when he is leaving his people, may modestly enough say something in his own vindication; for there are enough, as soon as his back is turned, will say more than is true by way of accusation. Note, 2. That when the apostle here speaks much that looks like self-commendation, it is rather to propound himself as a mirror for gospel-ministers, and a pattern for all pious pastors; that whenever they leave their people they may go off with a clear conscience, and be able to appeal to the consciences of their people as touching their carriage and conversation amongst them. Note, 3. The several particular instances of his ministerial faithfulness: 1. He instances in his own humility; though he was lofty in his ministry, yet was he lowly in his mind; *He served the Lord with all humility of mind.* The better any man is, the lower thoughts he has of himself. Almighty God renders that man most honourable, that minister most serviceable, whom he finds most humble. 2. In his affectionateness in preaching the gospel, he mingles tears with his exhortation, *Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears.* 3. In his constancy in preaching, and private inspection: *publicly* in the synagogues, and *privately from house to house*, like a good shepherd, labouring to understand the state of his whole flock, and of every lamb in it, that no soul might mis-

carry through his neglect, for which the great and good Shepherd died. 4. He acquaints them, not only with the manner, but also with the matter of his preaching; namely, *Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; which two graces comprehend the sum of a christian's duty. Ministers must join these two together in their preaching, and our hearers must not separate them in their practice. They who repent without believing, or believe without repenting, do indeed do neither.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Here the apostle proceeds not to boast of himself, but to clear himself of any charge or surmise of ministerial miscarriages, and also to propound himself as a pattern of ministerial faithfulness to the elders of the church at Ephesus. And here again, 1. Our apostle instances in his holy and heroic resolution and activity for God: *I know that bonds and afflictions abide me: nevertheless I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, and nothing moves me.* As if he had said, "I am fully resolved, by the grace of God enabling, that nothing shall divert me from my duty; neither deterring fear nor deluding favour of men shall ever affect me; but I will go out and go on in the strength of Christ, running my race with patience, and finishing my course with joy." Hence learn, 1. That the apprehension of sufferings must not shake the

resolution of a christian, much less daunt the courage of a gospel minister, ver. 24. *None of these things move me.* True ministerial courage delights in the air of that danger where duty dwells, and will neither be beaten off from doing an incumbent duty, nor be beaten on to a complaisance with any known sin. Learn, 2. That the ministers of Christ should endeavour not only to finish their ministry and course of christianity with faithfulness, but with joy; and that they may do so, let them see that they give up themselves wholly to the service of Christ without restriction or reserve, and live daily by faith on the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here was such a masculine spirit in our apostle, as bid defiance to death and danger; and the argument that excited him was, that he might finish his course with joy. Next, the apostle declares his impartiality in preaching the gospel, ver. 27, *I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* Where observe, He doth not say he had declared the whole counsel of God, (for who but God himself can do that?) but he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God; that is, he had not concealed from them any truth necessary to salvation. And this freed him from the blood of souls; if any perished, it was not long of him, but their blood was upon themselves: *I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.* It is happy when the ministers of God can appeal to the consciences of their people, and summon them in as witnesses to bear record for them at the bar of Christ.—Lastly, The apostle tells them, they were never like to see his face again; a cutting, killing word. How would it fire the zeal of ministers, and inflame the affections of a people, did they remember, that in a short time they must see the faces and hear the voices of each other upon earth no more! Lord, what fervent prayer for, what yearning of bowels towards, perishing sinners, would be found with us; what zeal for their conversion, what endeavours for their salvation, did we believe that the grave was making ready to receive us! how should we louden our cry to God, and how fulfil our trust to man, did we consider our grave and coffin are at hand! our glass has but a little sand; now we are preaching, but anon it will be said of us, we are gone: *And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching, shall see my face no more.*

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

The blessed apostle having, in the former part of his farewell sermon to the elders of Ephesus, vindicated his own sincerity among them, both as to his doctrine and practice, and cleared himself by close addresses and smart appeals to their consciences; he now urges them in a rousing and heart-melting exhortation to the utmost care and diligence in the exercise of their pastoral charge; and to take heed to themselves and the flock, to the whole flock which Christ had purchased with his blood, and the Holy Ghost had committed to his care, ver. 28. *Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.* Here observe, A two-fold duty, and a three-fold motive to enforce that duty: the first duty is to take heed to themselves: the second is to take heed to all the flock. The first part of a minister's duty is to take heed to himself: *Committite animam diligentibus suam*, says St. Bernard: He that neglects his own soul, will never take a faithful care of the souls of others. We must first look to ourselves, that our judgments be sound, our hearts holy, and our lives exemplary: we must take heed to ourselves, that we be fit for the employment which we undertake. This is not a burden for a child's shoulder; he that is himself a babe in knowledge, is altogether unfit to teach men the mysteries of salvation. Take we heed that our example doth not contradict our doctrine, that our practice doth not give our profession the lie; that we do as well as teach; not preach angelical sermons, and lead diabolical lives; but securing that grace to ourselves which we offer unto others, and shunning that sin ourselves which we



condemn in others; and this, because we have a depraved nature and vicious inclinations in us, as well as others; because we have a heaven to win, and a soul to save, as well as others; yea, when others have only their own souls to account for, we have not only our own, but others' too; in a word, because *our* sins do more dishonour God, discredit religion, more gratify the devil, more harden sinners, and have more of wilfulness in them, more perfidiousness in them, and more hypocrisy in them, than other men's; and we shall certainly be adjudged by God to a double damnation for them. Well therefore might the apostle say to the Ephesian elders, *Take heed unto yourselves*; next he adds, *and to all the flock*. That is, with a constant care and laborious diligence acquaint them with their duty, inform them of their danger, show them where their happiness lies, and the way and means for attaining of it; and, in order to this, *all the flock* must be *known*, that it may be *heeded*, and we must labour to be acquainted with the state of all our people as fully as we can; we must, as the apostle before us did, visit our people from house to house, that we may know their persons, know their inclinations, and know the manner of their conversation; what sins they are most in danger of, what temptations they are most liable to, and what duties they neglect, either for the matter or manner of them; and give them the best encouragement, directions, and assistance, we are able. This is the sum of the apostle's exhortation to the elders of Ephesus: *Take heed unto yourselves, and unto all the flock*. The motives to enforce the duty follow; and they are, 1. Drawn from their office; they are *overseers* of the flock, that is, officers appointed by solemn ordination to teach, to guide, to govern the churches committed to their care, and under their charge. 2. From the authority and excellency of him that called them to their office, *the Holy Ghost*. We read of some that were nominated by the special and immediate instinct of the Holy Ghost, as *Acts* i. 24. and xiii. 2. Others were ordained by the apostles, who were guided by the Holy Ghost then: and whoever is set apart to that office now, according to the rule of God's word, may truly be said to be made an *overseer* by the Holy Ghost; Almighty God concurring to own and bless his own institution. 3. From the dear purchase which Christ paid for, and the tender regard he bears to, this his

flock: *Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood*. Where observe, The divinity of Christ asserted: he is expressly called God, in opposition to the Arians, and their unhappy spawn the Socinians, who will allow him to be only man; but then his blood could never have purchased the church, which it is here said to do, being God and Man in one person: Man, that he might have blood to shed; and God, that his blood might be of infinite value, and inestimable preciousness when shed. Observe also the force of the apostle's argument: "If the church be thus dear to Christ, the chief Shepherd, she ought to be very dear to all under-shepherds; if Christ judged her salvation worth his blood, well may his ministers judge it worth their sweat." 4. From the danger which the church is in by seducers and false teachers, ver. 20. Grievous wolves will enter, not sparing the flock; and even from among yourselves shall arise heretics, who will vent their unsound doctrines to debauch men, first in their principles, and then in their practices: therefore *take heed to all the flock*.

Now, from the whole, note, 1. The church is Christ's flock, consisting of sheep and lambs: Christ himself is the great and good Shepherd: his ministers, under-shepherds and overseers: bloody persecutors, heretical seducers, and false teachers, are wolves which worry and divide the flock. Note, 2. That every flock should have its own pastor, and every pastor his own flock. Note, 3. That the flock should be no greater ordinarily, than the overseers are capable of taking heed of. Note, 4. That every overseer of Christ's flock ought to take great heed, both to himself and to the whole flock, in all the parts of his pastoral work, particularly public preaching and private inspection.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Here the apostle takes a very solemn farewell of the elders of the church at Ephesus, commending them to the guidance and protection of the grace of God, which was able to build them up in holiness here, and bring them to heaven hereafter. Where observe, 1. His courteous compellation, and therein

his great condescension. Although he was an apostle of the highest eminency, yet he disdains not to call these elders, who were both in office, and also in gifts, and graces, much inferior to him, by the name of brethren : *And now, brethren*, says the apostle to the elders of Ephesus. But probably together with the elders of Ephesus here were some of the church and people of Ephesus, who came to take their last leave of their departing apostle ; and then we may remark that there is a near relation, even that of brethren, between ministers and people, as well as between the ministers themselves, and this founded upon the account of religion and grace. Observe, 2. The apostle being now to take his last leave and farewell of the ministers and people at Ephesus, he commends them to God. It well becomes the faithful ministers of Christ at all times when they are with their people, but especially then when they are about to leave their people, to commit and commend them unto God ; that is, to recommend them to God's care and keeping, and to commit them to his conduct and guidance ; and this as a testimony of our faithfulness to God, whose our people are, and for whom we must become accountable to him ; and also as a testimony of our love to our people, and of our fervent desires for their salvation. Observe, 3. As the apostle commends them to God, so likewise to the word of his grace. To God as the efficient cause, and to the word of his grace as the instrumental cause, of their building up : *I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up.* Here note, 1. That the gospel is the word of God's grace ; so called, because it is the effect, the fruit, and product of rich mercy and free grace ; because it reveals the free grace of God in Christ to poor sinners ; because it works inherent grace and holiness in the hearts of sinners ; and because it carrieth on and perfecteth the work of grace unto glory. Note, 2. That believers, who are in a state of grace, have need of the *word of God* for their edification and building up. Note, 3. That the word of God is able to *build up* believers ; it is able to preserve them and keep them from decaying in grace and holiness, and it is able to further their growth in grace, and to bring it to perfection. Well and wisely therefore doth the apostle say, *I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace* ; he doth not say, *I commend you to God*, and the impulse of his Spirit : or, *I commend*

you to God, and to the light within ; or, *I commend you to God*, and to the traditions of the church ; but, *I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up.* Observe, 4. A superadded commendation, which is here given of the word of God's grace ; it is not only able to build us up, but to give us an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified ; that is, the word of God, if we follow the dictates and directions of it, will infallibly bring us to the glorious inheritance which God hath provided for all his saints, or sanctified ones. Here note, 1. That heaven is an inheritance, not like an inheritance on earth ; but it is the most sure, the most satisfying, the most durable, and the most delightful inheritance, *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* Note, 2. That heaven is the inheritance of *saints*, of all sanctified or holy persons, and only of such ; it is purchased for them, it is promised to them, it is taken up in their names, and possession of it kept for them by their forerunner ; in a word, heaven is prepared for them, and they are daily preparing for it ; and it shall be adjudged to them at the great day. Note, 3. That this inheritance of heaven is a gift, and free gift : Luke xii. 32. *It is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom.* This inheritance is all of grace, our right and title to it is of grace, our fitting and preparing for it is of grace ; all of grace, nothing of merit ; all of God, nothing of ourselves ; nothing in a way of meritorious causality, but only in the way of ministerial endeavour. Note, lastly, That God gives this inheritance by his word : *To the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance.* The word reveals to us the notice and knowledge of this inheritance ; the word makes an offer of this inheritance to every one of us, yea, it calls us to the acceptance, and invites us to the participation of it. Finally, God by his word begets his people to a lively hope of this inheritance, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. And also prepares and fits them by the word for the participation and possession of it ; Col. i. 12. *Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* And how doth our Father make us meet for this inheritance in glory, but by the word of his grace ? *I commend you therefore, brethren*, says the apostle, *to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to give you an*

*inheritance among them that are sanctified.*

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

In the conclusion of St. Paul's discourse to the elders of the church at Ephesus, he vindicates himself from the sordid sin of covetousness, affirming, that he had coveted no man's silver or gold; but by the labour of his hands had maintained himself, and them that were with him. Where note, That it is not simply unlawful for a minister of the gospel to labour with his hands, for his own and his family's support, when the poverty of the members of the church is such that they cannot maintain him without it. Observe farther, He directs these elders to labour as he did, if the case required it with them, as it did with him, that they might, by labouring as he, be in a capacity to support the weak, and relieve the poor. Yet note, He doth not propose this his practice as a precept, or precedent, or rule, to all ministers; for though St. Paul laboured with his hands in a case of necessity, and because false teachers were watching all advantages against him, yet he often declares a right and privilege which he had to be maintained by the church, without labouring with his hands for his own livelihood and subsistence; nay, asserts it to be the ordination and appointment of God himself, *That they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.* Observe, lastly, A remarkable saying of our blessed Saviour, not recorded by the evangelists, but undoubtedly spoken by him; namely, *That it is more blessed to give than to receive.* That is, the condition of the giver is more desirable than that of the receiver, and giving is more commendable than receiving. 1. The condition of the giver is more desirable than that of the receiver; because, 1. Giving is a sign of sufficiency and power. He that gives to another, is supposed to be well provided himself; he that gives, looks like a full being, and like a swelling river; whereas,

receiving implies want and weakness, emptiness, and unsatisfied desires. 2. Because giving includes choice; for what a man parts with to another, he has a freedom to keep himself; but the receiver is not to be his own carver, but must depend upon the courtesy of his neighbours. 3. Because the condition of the giver implies an honourable trust committed to him by God Almighty. Givers are God's almoners and stewards, the poor's guardians and patrons. An honourable trust this is, by which the lives and livelihood of the poor are in a manner committed to us. By all which it appears, that the condition of the giver is more desirable than that of the receiver. Note, 2. That giving is more commendable than receiving; it is a clearer evidence of a noble and virtuous disposition of mind: for, 1. It is a sign of our victory over the world, and that our conversation is in heaven; that we have worthy apprehensions of God, and honourable thoughts of his providence; and that we can trust him, and give him a part of his own whenever he calls for it. 2. Giving is better than receiving, because there is a more lasting pleasure in giving than in receiving: an alms taken is soon spent and forgotten, and the pleasure of it is over in two or three moments; but the pleasure of giving bears us company all along in this world, and will keep us company in the next: there is no such satisfactory pleasure as in doing good. Let us then often remember, and always put in practice, the words of our Lord Jesus, which he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; 38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Observe here, 1. What a solemn and sacred farewell St. Paul and the elders of Ephesus take of each other: *They kneeled down and prayed together*; instead of a parting cup, here is a parting prayer, and this accompanied with tears: *They all wept sore.* There is a sufficient occasion for sorrow and weeping, when the church loses a faithful pastor; it is a public loss,

and many are concerned in it. Observe, 2. How loth, how very loth, they were to part with the apostle, who had so exceedingly endeared himself unto them, by his holiness, humility, and universal usefulness. Accordingly they accompany him unto the ship, and when gone off to sea, send a long look after him; being more especially grieved at these words, *That they should see his face no more.* Learn thence, That a faithful minister of Christ is enjoyed with much love, and finally parted from with much sorrow, by those who believe and obey the gospel. Parting work is hard work: how hard is it for a husband and wife, for parents and children, to part! and perhaps it is as hard sometimes for ministers and people, who have lived in mutual endearments, to the glory of God, and singular comfort of each other, when they are pulled one from another alive by cruel persecutors, or when dying by the king of terrors. The parting is sad; but, blessed be God, the next meeting will know no parting. When ministers and people meet together at the right hand of God in heaven, they shall never part more, but shall for ever be with the Lord.

### CHAP. XXI.

The chapter before us acquaints us with St. Paul's dangerous voyage to Jerusalem, and enumerates the several places through which he passed in his journey thither; namely, through Coos and Rhodes, Phenicia, Ptolemais, Tyre, Cesarea, through many parts of Europe and Asia; and at last arrives safely at Jerusalem. O blessed apostle! what tongue can declare, what pen can set forth, the pains which thou tookest, and the hazards which thou didst run, in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel to the heathen world! And who can sufficiently magnify and holily admire the conduct of divine providence, in carrying thee cheerfully through all the difficulties of life, and enabling thee to finish thy course with joy! Lord! who would not be found faithful in thy service, who takest such an uninterrupted and unremitting care of thy servants, that safety evermore accompanies duty.

**A**ND it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara. 2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter acquainted us with the sorrowful and heavy parting of the elders and church of Ephesus from the holy apostle. Now, the first verse of this chapter informs us, that it was

not less sorrowful on the apostle's and his companions' part. So much the word here imports, *After we were gotten from them, ἀποσπασθέντας ἀπ' αὐτῶν*: "After we were torn from, and pulled as it were limb from limb from each other;" intimating the mutual endearments which were between them whilst together, and that inexpressible sorrow which was found amongst them at their parting. Verily, there is no stronger love, nor more endeared affections, betwixt any relations upon the earth, than betwixt the ministers of Christ and such of their people as they have been instrumental to bring home to God. Spiritual affections are stronger than natural; the removing of a spiritual father by death, or otherwise, is like tearing limb from limb; yea, like rending the head from the body. Lord, with what great difficulty and deep reluctance did the holy apostle and the church of Ephesus here part from one another! They were pulled and torn one from another, as the word imports.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. 4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

The divine Providence is not more signally discovered in governing the motions of the clouds, than it is in ordering the spirits and motions of his ministers. The motion of the clouds is not spontaneous and from themselves, but they move as they are moved by the winds; neither can the ministers of Christ choose their own stations, and govern their own motions, but must go when and whither the Spirit and providence of God directs and guides them; as evidently appears by St. Paul's present voyage to Jerusalem: though the journey was full of danger, yet his spirit was fully bent and set upon it: *I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem.* It was happy for the apostle, and his great advantage, that the will of God was so plainly revealed to him, touching this his journey to Jerusalem; for no sooner did he prepare himself to obey the call of God, and to undertake the journey, but he is presently assaulted by many strong temptations to decline it. The first

rub he met with in his way, was from the disciples at Tyre, *who spake by the Spirit*, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. But did not the Spirit of God then contradict itself, in bidding the apostle go, and then speaking to him by those disciples not to go? Not at all; St. Paul by extraordinary revelation was commanded to go to Jerusalem; these disciples, by a spirit of prophecy, only foretold the difficulties and dangers that would attend him in his journey; and so, through kindness and human affection, they dissuaded him from undertaking it. We must distinguish between the prediction of trouble, and the counsel of safety. The prediction of trouble; so they said through the Spirit, that it would be dangerous for Paul to go to Jerusalem. The counsel of safety proceeded from their private love and affection to him; whereby they dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem. Learn from hence, 1. That divine precept, and not providence, is to rule our way to duty. Learn, 2. That no discouragements or hinderances whatsoever will justify our neglect of a commanded duty. Whatever difficulties or discouragements lay in the way of the apostle's duty, he overcame them all with an heroic and truly christian resolution, saying, ver. 13. *I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of Jesus.*

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed, and went our way: and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed, 6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. 7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. 8 And the next *day*, we that were of Paul's company departed, and came to Cesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him. 9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

Observe here, 1. That nothing could divert the apostle from his intended journey to Jerusalem: the report of sufferings

was no discouragement to him, nor could the persuasive intreaties of his friends prevail with him. Seeing therefore he was resolved to go on, they all of them with their wives and children, to testify their great respect and affection to him, accompany him out of the city; and he and they kneeling down on the shore, pray together, and take their farewell of each other. The loving communion of saints, and prayer, are the marks of Christ's true disciples. Observe, 2. The apostle's next remove towards Jerusalem was from Tyre to Cesarea, where he lodges with Philip the evangelist; that is, one of them who were sent forth as itinerary preachers, here and there to dispense the gospel, and to confirm the churches. And one of the seven; that is, one of the seven deacons. *Acts vi.* Here note, That this Philip, in whose house St. Paul now lodged, was before driven out of his house by Paul's persecution. See *Acts viii. 1, &c.* *There was a great persecution against the church, and they were all scattered abroad; and Philip went down to Samaria.* This Philip, who was driven out of his house by Paul, when a persecutor, gladly received him into his house, being now Paul a convert; and this without any upbraiding, yes, without the least mention of what he had formerly been or done. It is an ill office to rake in the filth which God has covered, and to reproach men with or for the sins which God has pardoned; it argues some degree of envy at the grace of God, to upbraid men with the sins committed before conversion. Former miscarriages and injuries should be forgiven and forgotten upon true repentance, and we should receive them into our embraces whom Christ has taken into his bosom: *Paul went into the house of Philip the evangelist.*

10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Observe here, 1. That during the apostle's stay at Cesarea in Philip's house, a certain prophet named Agabus comes thither,

and prophetieth of St. Paul's bonds at Jerusalem. Where note, That though Agabus was a prophet, yet by what appeareth of him in scripture he was always a prophet of evil things, and bad tidings; he foretold the famine before, *Acts xi.* and Paul's bonds now. Such messengers of God, as give warnings of judgments to come, should and ought to be accepted, as well as they that bring us hopes of mercy and deliverance; that message may be true, which yet is displeasing. Observe, 2. Agabus useth a sign after the manner of the old prophets, who often prophesied by symbols and significant expressions, that they might the better imprint their predictions on the hearts of men. Thus Isaiah went naked and bare-foot, to show what the people of Israel should meet with under the king of Assyria, *Isa. xx.* And Ezekiel was to *pack up his stuff, and remove, to signify the people's removal into captivity*, *Ezek. xii.* It pleased God to teach his people by visible signs, as well as by word of mouth; that what was received by both senses, seeing and hearing, might make the deeper impression upon their minds. In like manner here Agabus uses a sign; he takes St. Paul's girdle, and binds his own hands and feet with it, signifying, that after that manner the Jews at Jerusalem would bind the apostle, and deliver him to the Gentiles; first to the Roman governor of Judea, and afterwards to Nero the Roman emperor. From whence we may remark, The great goodness and condescension of God, in giving the apostle so many warnings of his bonds; the Holy Ghost first made it known to him, *Acts xx. That bonds and afflictions did abide him.* The disciples at Tyre prophesied the same, *Acts xxi. 5.* And here Agabus, by a sensible sign, makes it known to him; and all this, that he might thoroughly be prepared for a suffering condition. God doth not love to take his children unprovided; St. Paul therefore was not surprised, but had warning upon warning of his present danger. If a sudden and unexpected flood of miseries and calamities break in upon us, for afflictions seldom go single, it is not because we want warning, but because we are not so wise as to take warning. When we are well and at ease, we will not think of death and the cross; and therefore, if we be surprised and unprovided, we may thank our own security. Our apostle here being fore-warned, was fore-armed

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

Observe here, 1. The entire affection of the disciples to the holy apostle; *Both we and they of that place besought him, that he would not go up to Jerusalem.* Learn, That the lives and liberties of those who are eminent instruments of God's glory, are very dear and precious to the faithful servants of God. Who can blame St. Paul's companions or the disciples here, for desiring and endeavouring the preservation of so precious an instrument as the apostle was? and yet it is not improbable but Satan might have a hand in this matter, and endeavour by the apostle's friends' persuasion to weaken his resolution; for the devil oft endeavoureth to take us off from our duty by the entreaties of our friends, who mean well in what they say. Thus when St. Peter lovingly advised our Saviour against his sufferings, *Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee*, *Matt. xvi. Get thee behind me, Satan*, says Christ. It was Peter's tongue, but Satan tuned it. Who would have thought that Christ's disciples should have been Satan's instruments? We must not measure our friends' counsel by their good meaning, but by God's word; we must be deaf to all relations, that we may discharge our duty to God. Thus we find the apostle here, *He would not be persuaded*, but expostulates with them, *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart?* Observe, 2. St. Paul's entire affection to God, and his firm resolution for his duty: *He would not be persuaded.* But did the apostle do well in this, to withstand all the importunities, and reject the unanimous advice, of all his friends? How doth this carriage agree with that character of heavenly wisdom, *Jam. iii. 17. That it is easy to be entreated?* I answer, To the practice of our duty, it is praise-worthy to be easy to be entreated; but not from our duty. St. Paul knew his duty, and understood the will of God: and therefore his

friends might sooner break his heart, than break his purpose. Learn hence, That no persuasions of friends, no apprehensions of danger, should ever be able to turn us out of the way of our duty. When Peter dissuaded Christ from suffering, our Saviour rebuked him with the same indignation as he did the devil tempting him to idolatry. Observe, 3. How the apostle lovingly and gently rebukes their fond and inordinate sorrow for his departure: *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart?* As if he had said, "What mean these passionate tears and entreaties? Alas! whether you think it so or not, they are but so many snares and temptations of Satan, to turn my feet out of the way of obedience: you do as much as in you lies to break my heart; but, by the grace of God, nothing shall break me off from my purpose, nor weaken my courage and resolution for God." When a saint is once satisfied in the call and command of God to any duty, he fears neither impending nor approaching dangers in the way of duty. Observe, 4. The apostle's quieting and calming arguments, with which he labours to charm their unruly passions: *I am ready both to be bound, and to die for Christ.* I am ready, 1. That is, God hath fitted me for suffering-work: flesh and blood is overruled in me by the Spirit of God; I am prepared for whatever God pleaseth; be it a prison, be it a scaffold, be it life, be it death, I am provided for both. Liberty is dear, and life is dear, but Christ is dearer than either: therefore what mean you to work against the design of God, who hath fitted and prepared my heart for suffering-service? *I am ready,* 2. That is, my will and resolution stands in a full bent: my heart is fixed,—my friends, my heart is fixed; do not therefore disorder and discompose my spirits, by casting such temptations and stumbling-blocks in my way; for I am come to a point, nothing shall divert me from this noble enterprise for God. *I am ready,* 3. That is, fully determined to comply with the call and command of God; whatever befalls me, I am not so solicitous about that: my Captain that leads me on, I am sure, will bring me off safe, either dead or alive. Therefore all your tears and entreaties are but cast away upon me; ye had better be quiet, and cheerfully resign me up to the will of God; for I am ready both to be bound and to die. From whence learn, That it is a blessed and excellent frame of spirit, when the ser-

vants of God are prepared and ready for the hardest services and sharpest sufferings, to which the Lord may at any time call them: *I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.* Observe, 5. The disciples' discretion: *When he would not be persuaded, they ceased:* that is, they gave over their importunities, and urged him no farther beyond his own inclinations and resolutions. It is the disposition of humble spirits to submit to those that are wiser than themselves, and not to be too stiff and peremptory in their own opinions and conceits; a lesson which most men have great need to learn. Observe, 6. The pious ground of this their discretion; namely, acquiescence in the divine will: *The will of the Lord be done.* They refer the event to God's determination, and submit all to his sovereign pleasure. Thence learn, That it is the duty and desire, and ought to be the care and endeavour, of all the children of God, to be willing to submit themselves and theirs to the dispensation of God's providence, in whatever befalls either them or theirs. For this we have Christ's example, Matt. xxvi. 39, *Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* The example of David, 2 Sam. xv. 26, *Here am I, let him do what seemeth good in his sight.* The example of Eli, 1 Sam. i. 18, *It is the Lord, let him do whatsoever he pleaseth.* Such is his justice and righteousness, that he can do his children no wrong; and such is his tender mercy and loving kindness, that he will do them no harm. The absolute sovereignty of God over us, and the sight of God in all his providential dispensations towards us, influences at once our judgments, our wills, and our affections, our expressions and actions, that we neither dare to think, speak, or act any thing in contradiction to, or in opposition against, the wisdom and will of God. That which is oft against our will, is not always against our interest; but if we belong to God, all afflictions upon us are federal dispensations and covenant blessings to us, and either are good or shall work for good; therefore it is both our duty and interest to submit to the wisdom of Providence, and say with these disciples, *The will of the Lord be done.*

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. 16 There went with us

also *certain* of the disciples of Cesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. 17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James ; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord ;—

The apostle having boldly resolved, that come life, or come death, he would be obedient to the call of God by his Spirit, and that nothing should divert him from his intended journey to Jerusalem, sets forward from Cesarea to Jerusalem, accompanied with certain disciples of Cesarea, who brought him to the house of one Mnason, an old disciple, who had long ago received the faith, and now lived at Jerusalem, in whose house the apostle lodged. Here note, What a badge of honour is put upon Mnason, even that of being an old disciple ; to be an old man is an honour, but to be an old disciple is a double honour : it has a resemblance of him who is the Ancient of Days. Where antiquity and piety, where agedness and holiness, do concur, it renders a person as like the Divine Majesty as can be expected on this side glory. To be an old disciple is a greater honour than to be a king or emperor. Observe next, The apostle being come to Jerusalem, is kindly received of the church there : he enters the house of St. James, the bishop of Jerusalem, where the elders that were present congratulate his arrival, and he relates to them what great things God had wrought by his ministry, and they all gave praise to God for the great and glorious success of the gospel. Learn hence, That all christians in general, but the ministers of Christ in special, ought to make a particular declaration of the great and marvellous works which the Lord hath wrought for them, and by them. Thus did St. Paul here ; he was very particular, no doubt, in relating the mighty works of God in the conversion of the Gentiles by his ministry from time to time, and from place to place ; and all this, not to extol himself, but to exalt God for receiving the

Gentiles into the faith and fellowship of the gospel.

—And said unto them, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe ; and they are all zealous of the law : 21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, That they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs. 22 What is it therefore ? the multitude must needs come together : for they will hear that thou art come. 23 Do therefore this that we say to thee : we have four men which have a vow on them ; 24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads : and all may know, that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing, but *that* thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. 25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written, *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

We had Paul's report to the church at Jerusalem, of the success which God had given him in his ministry amongst the Gentiles ; this is related in the foregoing paragraph of the chapter. In these verses before us, we have the church's reply to the apostle's relation, *They glorified God* : first, for the great success given to the word of his grace amongst the Gentiles ; and withal they acquaint him with the like success, which the preaching of the gospel had amongst the Jews : *Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which do believe* ; the original runs, *how many tens of thousands do believe* ; which intimates the great and wonderful success of the gospel. Well might our Saviour compare it to a grain of mustard-seed, seeing it had spread itself far and near in so short a time. If we consider the smallness of its beginning, the despicableness of the instru-



ments, the shortness of the time, the obstinacy and prejudices of the Jews against the gospel, and yet remark the vast number of thousands and ten thousands of the Jews that did already believe, embrace, and entertain it; we need not wonder that St. Paul, 1 Tim. iii. 16. reckons it as one of the greatest mysteries of godliness, that Jesus Christ was preached to the Gentiles, and believed on in the world. That is, that so many thousands both of Jews and Gentiles were brought to own him, and submit to him as Lord and Saviour. Observe next, The advice given by the church at Jerusalem to St. Paul, concerning the Jews which did believe in that place. It seems the Jews, though they had received the gospel, yet thought that the ceremonial law must still be observed; therefore, in condescension to their weakness, and to prevent their taking offence, they advise the apostle, not as a thing necessary in itself, but as an expediency in reference to their weakness, to conform himself to some of the Jewish ceremonies and purifications; for though they were not then needful, yet they were not then unlawful; they might then be used, when the use of them would any ways conduce to the gaining and bringing over the Jews to a love of christianity. The synagogue was not hastily to be cast out of the church, like the Heathenish superstitions; but to die by degrees, and be decently interred. Here note, That the law of Moses, as to its moral part, Christ continued as his law: the ceremonial part, as to the use of types and ceremonies, signifying him that was to come, this was abrogated at Christ's coming; and the political part ceased, when the Jewish polity was dissolved: but the abrogation of the whole was not fully made known at the first, but by degrees; and the exercise of it long tolerated to the Jews. Observe, lastly, The particular advice which they give the apostle, to go into the temple, and perform the legal ceremony of purification: *We have four men which have a vow; them take, and purify thyself; that all may know that thou walkest orderly, and keepest the law.* That is, "Seeing we have four men here which have a Nazarite's vow upon them, the time of which vow is now expired, and they are to shave themselves ceremoniously in the temple; go thou with them, and perform the legal ceremony of purification there, that the people may know that the report of thee is not true; but that thou, being a Jew,

dost thyself keep the law." Here we may observe the truth of what St. Paul elsewhere declared, that *to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, yea, became all things to all men, that he might gain some.* A noble pattern for the ministers of the gospel to write after, in yielding, so far as we may without sin or scandal, to the weakness of others, in order to the furtherance of the great ends of our ministry among our people: *To the Jews I became as a Jew.*

26 Then Paul took the men; and the next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. 27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, 28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further, brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. 29 (For they had seen before with him, in the city, Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) 30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple. And forthwith the doors were shut.

Observe here, 1. That at the instance and importunity of his friends, St. Paul is persuaded to purify himself in the temple; partly to gain upon the affections of the believing Jews, who were still zealous of the law; and partly to confute the false aspersions of them that reported him to be against all ceremonial observances. If any had grudged that, after the coming of the gospel, so much cost should be bestowed on the law, and say, with murmuring Judas, *To what purpose was this waste?* the law might truly answer with our Saviour, and say, "He did it for my burial, and for the more solemn interment of me." Observe, 2. How blind was the zeal, and how

furious the rage, of the unbelieving Jews, against the apostle! They seek, and because they could not find, they take an occasion to vent their malice upon him; accordingly they put the whole city of Jerusalem into an uproar, upon a pretence that he had brought Trophimus, a Gentile, into the temple, to profane and pollute it; and in their blind rage they dragged the apostle out of the temple, as a profaner of it. Well might the apostle say he was *in deaths often*, 2 Cor. xi. 23. He was now in danger to be pulled in pieces by this tumult, and of being made a sacrifice to the fury of the rabble; but God, who never wants ways and means for the seasonable succour and relief of his faithful servants, in an unexpected manner, and by unthought-of means, rescued the apostle from the jaws of death and danger, as the next verses inform us.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar; 32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: And when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. 33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. 34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. 35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers, for the violence of the people. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him!

Note here, 1. How the great and gracious God provideth seasonable rescues for his persecuted and perplexed saints and servants: *When they went about to kill Paul*, God raises him up a deliverer. Note, 2. The unexpected instrument of the apostle's deliverance, and that was an heathen governor. The Romans never durst trust such vast multitudes at Jewish

festivals without a strong garrison to be a check upon them; accordingly the governor, having tidings of the tumult, brings down a band of soldiers, to see the peace kept; he rescues the injured apostle out of their hands, commands him to be bound with two chains, as Agabus had foretold, and the soldiers bear him up in their arms from the violence of the people. Hence we learn, 1. That a bad government, even an heathen government, is better than anarchy. Under a tyrannical government many may be uneasy, but under popular rage none can be long at rest. Learn, 2. That heathens are oftentimes the protectors of christians against the blind rage of those that profess to worship the same God. St. Paul and these unbelieving Jews worshipped the same God, and yet the heathen soldiers were fain by force to carry and guard the apostle from the fury of the bloody unbelieving Jews. Thus God raiseth up what instruments he pleaseth to subserve his own gracious ends and designs in the preservation of his people. The barbarous heathen soldiers protect St. Paul, and keep him from being torn in pieces by the Jews, who worshipped the same God with him.

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? 38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? 39 But Paul said, I am a man *which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia*, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. 40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people: and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Observe, 1. The justice which the chief captain, though an heathen soldier, doth St. Paul: he demands *what he had done*, before he punishes him. An heathen would hear the cause before he condemns the person; a piece of justice which the law of nature requires and obliges to. Observe, 2. The unjust suspicion which the chief

captain had of St. Paul's being a very bad man; *Art not thou that Egyptian which madest an uproar, and leddest out four thousand men that were murderers?* Here St. Paul without cause is suspected for a rebel, a seducer, and a murderer, by the chief captain. It is not in the power of the most unspotted innocence to protect from jealousies and suspicion, from censure and calumny, from slander and false accusation. The peaceable apostle is suspected for a turbulent incendiary, *Art not thou the Egyptian that madest an uproar?* Observe, 3. The just and necessary apology which St. Paul makes for himself: *I am a Jew of Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city.* Where note, 1. He describes his original; I am a Jew, not that wicked Egyptian which you expected me to be, but a Jew of a religious and noble extraction. Learn thence, That to be descended from religious and noble ancestors, is a desirable privilege and singular prerogative. St. Paul was a Jew, descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy patriarchs. Note, 2. He describes the country where he was born: he was born in Cilicia, a rich and fruitful country in Asia. Learn thence, That to be born in a rich and fruitful country (if godly and religious) is a very considerable favour and privilege; it was not blind chance and fortune, but a wise and merciful providence of God, which appointed both the place of our birth, and determined the bounds of our habitation. What mercy is it that we were born, not in Spain, not in Turkey, not in a land of darkness, but in a valley of vision! If the Spaniards have the golden mines, we have the golden treasure of the scriptures, *more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold*, Psal. xix. Note, 3. He describes, not only his country, but his native city, and the dignity of it: he was born in *Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city*, it being the metropolis or chief city of all Cilicia: in this famous city was the apostle born. Learn thence, That to be born in a noble, free, and famous city, especially if religious, is a desirable favour and privilege. St. Paul was born in the noble city of Tarsus; but how could he then say as he did, *Acts xxii.* that he was a Roman? *Answer*, So he was; but not by birth, but by immunity and privilege. Tarsus was invested with the Roman privileges, and made free of Rome by M. Antonius: thus Paul was free born, and declared that they ought not to scourge a Roman citizen. Note,

lastly, That though the forementioned privileges are considerable privileges, namely, to be descended from noble ancestors, to be born in a famous country, and in a free city, (passages of divine Providence not to be overlooked or disregarded, but very highly valued and thankfully acknowledged;) yet must it be remembered, that all these are but outward and temporal privileges, common to the worst, as well as the best of men; such privileges as a man may enjoy, and yet be under the wrath of God, and the guilt of eternal damnation. Let us labour to be nobly minded, as well as nobly descended—by regeneration born from above; otherwise we are low born, mean born, be our parents never so high. Thus the chapter concludes with an account of the apostle's eminent preservation in a time of imminent danger: when likely to have been torn in pieces by the riotous rabble, God stirs up the chief captain, an heathen, belonging to the bloody trade of war, to rescue oppressed innocence; and the guard of soldiers, who had no manner of affection for Paul, God sets as a life-guard about his person, they bear him up in their arms, give him liberty to speak for himself; and his apology, or defensive plea, we have recorded in the following chapter.

## CHAP. XXII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we have the apostle craving leave of the chief captain to speak unto the people, who, without any just cause, had made a violent assault upon him, and attempted to take away his life. Liberty of speech being granted him, he stands upon the stairs, near the gate of the castle in which he was a prisoner, makes a sign to the people to hold their peace, and, when they gave audience, in the Hebrew tongue he thus bespeaks them.

**MEN**, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence, *which I make now unto you.* 2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) 3 I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. 4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons

both men and women. 5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders : from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there, bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Here begins the apostle's apology, or defensive plea, which he makes for himself before the people at Jerusalem, who, in the foregoing chapter, had so injuriously treated him. In which apologetical narration, we have these particulars observable: First, observe, With what lenity and mildness he bespeaks his cruel and pestilent persecutors, the people of the Jews ; he accosts them with titles of respect and honour, *Men, brethren, and fathers* ; not with opprobrious invectives ; he doth not render evil for evil, or railing for railing ; he had not so learned Christ, he knew how to suffer reproach for the gospel ; but to prosecute his persecutors with hard names and characters of reproach, was a piece of zeal, which St. Paul and the holy sufferers of those times were little acquainted with. Observe, 2. How the apostle insinuates himself unto his auditors, that so he might gain their attention to what was spoken : *Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye, I pray, my defence which I make unto you.* There is a lawful and pious insinuation for gaining the attention of our auditors, which the ministers of Christ may and ought to make use of ; as the workman that would drive his nail, dips it in oil. We gain our auditors' attention by courteous and loving compellations : *Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken.* Observe, 3. The apology or plea itself, in which he sets before them, 1. His extraction, *I am a Jew, born in Tarsus.* 2. His education, *brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.* 3. His profession, *he was zealous towards God* ; that is, he was one of the sect among the Jews which were called Zealots, and was very strict and exact in the observation of the law, a bitter enemy to christianity, and a bloody persecutor of all that owned themselves the disciples of Jesus, as the high-priest very well knows, says he, *from whom I received a commission, that if I found any of this way, whether men or women, I should bring them bound unto Jerusalem.* Here note, That Damascus was five or six days' journey from Jerusalem ; yet Paul,

when a persecutor, sticks not at it, but spurs on through fire and water to glut his malice and revenge on the poor members of Jesus Christ. Learn thence, That persecutors will spare neither purse nor pains, they will stick and stop at nothing, though never so toilsome and hazardous, so they may but satisfy their revenge upon the poor disciples of Jesus Christ : *I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women.*

6 And it came to pass, that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord ? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid ; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Our apostle having related what he was before his conversion in the foregoing verses, in these and the following verses he declares the manner of his conversion, namely, That when he was travelling to Damascus to pursue his persecuting design, a great light shined round about him, upon which he fell to the ground, and heard these words articulately spoken to him : *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?* Where observe, That Christ takes the opposition made against his gospel, and the persecution carried on against his members, as done unto himself ; it being against his friends, his cause, and interest : as the honour done unto the Head redounds unto the members, so the wrongs and injuries offered to the members, are resented by the Head. Christ said not thus (when upon earth) unto his murderers, *Why bind ye me ? Why buffet ye me ? Why scourge ye me, and crucify me ?* But now, when his members suffered, he cries out from heaven, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?* Lord, thou art more tender of thy body mystical, than thou wast of thy body natural ; more sensible of thy members' sufferings, than of thine own ! Observe next, How ready the apostle was to understand and know, and

how desirous to execute and do, the will of God: *Who art thou, Lord? and what wilt thou have me to do?* We may sooner find fire without heat, than a true convert without operative grace. Observe farther, Christ's answer to Paul's enquiry: *Who art thou, Lord?* says Paul; *I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest*, saith Christ. Where note, That contemned, though not contemptible, name, *Jesus of Nazareth*, is owned by Christ from heaven. Mark, he said not, *I am Jesus the Son of God*, *I am Jesus the heir of the world*, and *Lord of all*; but, *I am Jesus of Nazareth*. He glorieth in that reproach which his enemies cast upon him, *Jesus of Nazareth*; he owned his name from heaven, to teach his members not to be ashamed of it when reproached by it here on earth. Observe lastly, The witness of Paul's conversion: *The men that were with him, who saw the light, but heard not the voice*. It is very probable that he had a considerable number of officers with him, to bring both men and women that professed christianity bound to Jerusalem. These saw the light shining, and heard a confused noise like thunder, but they heard not the articulate, much less the efficacious, voice of Christ, which spake so convincingly to his soul. Lord, how many are there who come under the preaching of the gospel, that, with Paul's companions, hear only a confused noise, an empty sound! They do not hear the efficacious voice of Christ, speaking to their hearts with a strong hand, and so remain shut up under the power of unbelief.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. 11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fa-

thers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Here observe, 1. That although Christ converted Paul himself, yet Ananias, as his minister, must instruct him: by Christ is grace infused, but by his ministers increased. Such an honour doth Christ put upon the ministers of the gospel, that he makes use of their endeavours, ordinarily, both for the protection and augmentation of grace in the hearts of his people. O the necessity and usefulness of a standing ministry! It is a singular favour to have the mind of God made known to us by men like unto ourselves. And behold the honour which God puts upon his ministers, in using them as conduit-pipes for conveying the water of life unto us, which is not ordinarily communicated immediately from himself, nor immediately received by us! Observe, 2. The title given by Ananias to Saul, *Brother Saul*. They were now brethren by faith and profession, owning the same God, united to the same Saviour, animated by the same Spirit, encouraged by the same promises, partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same glory. As the scripture speaks of a brotherhood betwixt Christ and believers, *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*; so it speaks of a brotherhood betwixt believers themselves, *Love the brotherhood*; that is, the whole fraternity and society of christians, who are *Sanguine Christi conglutinati*; cemented by the blood of Christ, and united by the bond of love. Observe, 3. Ananias acquaints Saul with the special favours which God intended for him: *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee*, or taken thee by the hand, as the word signifies, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that just one. So he calls the blessed Jesus, to convince them of their sin in putting him to death; *And be a witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard*. The work of the ministers of the gospel is now to witness for, hereafter to witness against: now they witness for God and his truth, and persuade sinners to believe

it; hereafter they will witness against sinners for not believing and obeying the truth of God. Lord, what a sad consideration is this, that the ministers of Christ must be brought in as witnesses against the souls of their neighbours and friends, and be forced to testify to their faces for their condemnation! Ah, Lord, with what an heart must a poor minister study when he considereth, that every sermon that he preaches must be brought in for a witness against many, if not most, of his hearers! Doubtless this sad reflection makes every faithful minister of Christ study hard, pray hard, entreat hard, be earnest and instant in season and out of season, that they may not be condemners of their people's souls. Observe, 4. The advice which Ananias gives to this new convert, to take upon him the badge of christianity, to wit, Baptism: *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.* Here note, That sacraments are not empty insignificant signs; but God, by his grace and blessing, renders his own ordinances effectual for these great ends for which his wisdom has appointed them: *Be baptized, and wash away thy sins.* As water cleanseth the body, so the blood of Christ, signified by water, washes away the guilt of the soul. Where true faith is, together with the profession of it by baptism, there is salvation promised, Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.*

17 And it came to pass, that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence, unto the Gentiles.

St. Paul, having thus declared to the Jews his wonderful manner of conversion,

proceeds next to acquaint them how desirous he was to have preached to the Jews rather than to the Gentiles, if the will of God had seen fit: but it proved otherwise; for, as he was praying in the temple, he had a vision, in which he was commanded to hasten out of the city, because his former zeal in opposing the gospel would hinder his present preaching of it from being successful. Against this he humbly argued, that his former zeal against christianity might, he hoped, be an argument to persuade the Jews, his countrymen, to embrace christianity. But this argument did not prevail for his staying at Jerusalem; but he was commanded to depart from thence, to preach the gospel to the despised Gentiles, who had not such strong expectations against him, but would with more readiness embrace his doctrine. Learn hence, 1. That carnal reasonings are very apt to arise in the hearts of God's own servants, and cause them to object something against their obedience to the divine commands. Here the apostle objects, that according to his reason he saw greater probability of doing good by his ministry among the Jews than he could hope for among the Gentiles, who would be afraid of him, as Ananias was; but Christ repeats his command, *Depart, and get thee hence, for I will send thee to the Gentiles.* And now the apostle doth no longer dispute, but despatch. This teaches us, 2. To lay by all our carnal reasonings and vain pretences, when once the call and command of God is clear, and no longer cavil, but comply; no longer object, but instantly obey. We may safely follow God blindfold, when once we have assurance that he goes before us, and obey every command without hesitation or limitation.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. 23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, 24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. 25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the

centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. 27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. 28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born. 29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. 30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Observe here, 1. With what patience the Jews heard the apostle's discourse until he made mention of the Gentiles, and that he was appointed to preach to them. Upon which they brake forth into fury and passion, and expressed their fury by throwing dust into the air, and casting off their clothes, as if they would presently stone him, whom they looked upon as the worst of villains, and unworthy to live: where we may remark at once both what a vile opinion the Jews had of the Gentiles, whom they called and accounted dogs, and what an high esteem they had of themselves, and a proud conceit of their own deservings, as if the favours of heaven belonged to none but themselves, who yet trampled upon them, when they were tendered to them. Observe, 2. What a vile esteem these wicked Jews had of the holy and innocent apostle, who desired above all things to preach the glad tidings of the gospel to them, and longed most affectionately for the conversion and salvation of them. They account him the greatest villain upon earth, and unworthy to live upon it; but the good man had learnt (and let all the faithful ministers of Christ learn it after him) to take pleasure

in reproaches, in persecutions, in necessities and distresses, for Christ's sake. *Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not meet that he should live.* Observe, 3. The pious prudence and innocent policy which the apostle uses for his own preservation: when they were about to bind him to a post, in order to the scourging of him, the apostle declares himself a free denizen of Rome, by being born in one of the cities which the Roman emperor had made free; accordingly St. Paul pleads for himself the privilege of a Roman citizen, who neither ought to be bound or beaten. Though we may not render evil for evil, yet we may right ourselves by all lawful means. Christ allows as much of the serpent as the dove in his servants, provided the subtilty of the one doth not destroy the simplicity of the other. The head of the serpent and the heart of the dove do best together; for as policy without piety is too subtle to be good, so piety without policy is too simple to be safe. Observe, 4. How the chief captain, fearing he had done more than he could answer, because it was death for any one in authority to violate the Roman privileges; therefore more out of fear than love, or more out of love to himself than the apostle, he looses St. Paul's bonds. Thence note, That when at any time the persecutors of the saints do desist from their bloody purposes, it is not out of love to them, but love to themselves. Observe lastly, The saints' deliverances from affliction and persecution, whilst on this side heaven, are not total or final, but momentary and partial. The apostle was delivered from his chains, not from his confinement; though unbound, not set at liberty. Next day, we find him before the great council, or Sanhedrim, and fresh bonds and afflictions abide him. Little rest is to be expected by the members, and less rest by the faithful ministers, of Jesus Christ in this world: blessed be God for the believing hopes of an eternal rest! where the fury of the persecutor, the injuries of the oppressor, shall cease for ever; where no sin shall affect us, no sorrow afflict us, no danger affright us; but we shall be perfectly like unto God, as well in purity as immortality. In the mean time, may we, the ministers of God, who are set for the defence of the gospel, bear the burden and heat of the day with patience and courage, resolution and constancy; may we gird up the loins of our minds, not accounting either our labours or our lives

dear unto us, so that we finish our course with joy, and fulfil the ministry which we have received of the Lord, glorying in our reproaches for well-doing; yea, though we be accounted the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things: for when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away.

## CHAP. XXIII.

In the foregoing chapter we find the apostle in prison, but having leave given him to make his defence; which accordingly he did, but little to the satisfaction of the enraged multitude. In this chapter we find him before the Sanhedrim, or great council at Jerusalem, professing his own innocency; but instead of setting him at liberty, the cursed Jews conspire his destruction, but the providence of God wonderfully interposes for his deliverance, as the chapter before us fully informs us.

**A**ND Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. 2 And the high-priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. 3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

Here we have observable the apostle's sober and ingenuous profession and protestation, Ananias's insolent and injurious injunction, St. Paul's zealous answer and contestation. Observe, 1. The apostle's sober and ingenuous profession and protestation, ver. 1. *I have lived in all good conscience unto this day*; that is, during his continuance in the Jewish religion, and since his conversion to the christian religion, he had walked uprightly, and according to his knowledge, and the light of his conscience. But had Paul a good conscience when he persecuted the christians? *Ans.* He went according to his conscience when he persecuted: he verily thought he did God service in so doing, and it was not any selfish end or sinister design he propounded to himself, but zeal for his religion provoked him to persecution, Phil. iii. 6. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.* It is certainly a man's duty to follow his conscience; but then it is as much his duty to inform his conscience, as

it is to follow it; *I have lived in all good conscience until this day.* Here note, The apostle sets forth the goodness of his conscience these four ways. 1. From the goodness of his conversation: *I have lived.* A good conversation is the best evidence of a good conscience. God doth not measure men's sincerity by the tides of their affections, but by the constant bent of their resolutions, and the general course and tenor of their conversations. Every man's conscience is as his life is. 2. From the generality of his care and obedience: *I have lived in all good conscience*: if it be not a conscience all good, it is no good conscience at all. Herod had *some* good conscience, *he did many things*; but the apostle went farther, he lived not in some, but *in all good conscience*. 3. The apostle sets forth the goodness of his conscience from the integrity of it towards God: *I have lived in all good conscience before God.* Many a man's conscience passeth for a good conscience before men, and perhaps before himself, which yet are not good *before God*, the judge of conscience. 4. From his continuance and constancy, *Until this day; I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.* It is not sufficient to begin a good life, and to have a good conscience; but we must keep it too, and that all our days, even to our last day. Happy man! that can truly say at his dying day, I have lived in all good conscience until this day. Observe, 2. As the apostle's solemn protestation, so the high-priest's injurious injunction: *Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.* Here note, What is the reward and portion of a good conscience from the world: to be smitten either on the mouth, or with the mouth; either with the fist, or with the tongue. There is nothing so enrages men of wicked consciences, as the profession and practice of a good conscience doth: but better ten blows on the face than one on the heart; better a thousand blows for a good conscience, than one from it. Observe, 3. St. Paul's zealous answer and contestation, *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.* Where note, 1. That although the apostle doth not smite again as he was smitten, though he did not smite Ananias on the cheek, as he smote him on the mouth, yet he gives him a check and sharp reproof for his violence and injustice. Thence learn, That christian patience, though it binds a man's hands, yet it doth



not always bind his tongue; though it lays a law upon a man to forbear violence, yet it lays not a law upon him to enjoin him silence. St. Paul though he did not strike yet durst speak; though he held his hands, yet he did not hold his peace. Though religion pinions a man's arms from striking, yet it doth not seal up a man's lips from speaking; but we may declare both our own innocency, and others' injustice. Note, 2. St. Paul doth not say, God shall judge thee: or God shall plague thee; but God shall smite thee: denoting, that as there is always equity, so sometimes a retaliation in the executions of divine justice, or a recompensing like for like. God sometimes returns smiting for smiting, so that the sinner is forced to cry out, *As I have done, so God hath requited me.* God punishes sometimes in the same kind, sometimes in the same manner, sometimes in the same place; that sinners are forced to cry out, Righteous art thou, O Lord! and just are thy judgments!

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high-priest?

Observe here, That Ananias the high-priest having commanded the apostle unheard and uncondemned to be smitten, the apostle denounces the just judgments of God upon him for the same; yet not in a way of imprecation, but prediction; rather foretelling what would come, than wishing or desiring that it should come; not in a way of revenge, or recompensing evil for evil, but in a way of ministerial reproof, which the standers by call reviling. *Revilest thou God's high-priest?* Thence learn, that profane sinners look upon the faithful reproofs which the ministers of God give them for their lewdness, to be no better than revilings; they think we revile them, if we do but rebuke them; whereas, though we chasten sinners with the rod of reproof, we dare not sting them with the scorpion of reproach.

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high-priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Several interpretations are given by expositors of these words, *I wist not, brethren, that he was the high-priest.* 1. Some think that St. Paul did not really know the high-priest, having been gone so

long from Jerusalem; and the high-priest being made yearly. Others say, 2. That there being a great throng about him, the apostle could not distinctly hear who it was that spake to him. 3. Some understand it of absolute denial, that any such office as that of high-priest ought then to be in being. As if the apostle had said, "I do not own any man to be a lawful high-priest now, that function being abolished and disannulled at the coming of the Messiah." Again, 4. Others understand the words, as if the apostle denied him to be the lawful high-priest, one of God's appointing, he being one of man's making, having purchased the place with money; for the power and covetousness of the Romans put a new high-priest every year to officiate: accordingly, St. Paul, knowing this man to be none of the posterity of Aaron, but brought in by sordid gain, might justly disown him to be the high-priest. Lastly, there are who affirm, That the apostle did certainly see and know the high priest; and that his meaning is, "That having received such unjust usage in the court as to be openly smitten in the time of bearing, he did not know, that is, he did not consider, who it was that spake to him, and therefore spake hastily and unadvisedly." The scripture will not bear us out to use ill words to magistrates, should we be, as St. Paul here was, ill used by them; yet are magistrates no more to be flattered than they are to be reproached. The greatest may be reprov'd, and with a gracious severity told of their faults; and St. Paul did no more. It is no sin to tell the judgments of God, which will certainly come upon injurious and unjust oppressors.

6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Observe here, The innocent policy which the apostle uses for his own preservation: he, perceiving that the council before whom he stood were not all of a piece, but patched up of Pharisees and Sadducees, he publicly professes himself a Pharisee by education, and of that persuasion now in point of the resurrection. Thus at once he cast in a bone of contention between the Sad-

duces who denied the resurrection, and the Pharisees who owned it; and obliged the Pharisees, at least as to that opinion, to take his part, and so by pious prudence he turned their opposition against him upon one another: that by setting them at variance he might the better escape. Learn hence, That an innocent and prudent policy may warrantably be made use of by the members and ministers of Jesus Christ, without any blemish to their holy profession, in order to our preservation from the hands of persecutors; a serpentine subtilty may be made use of, together with a dove-like innocency. Thus did St. Paul here: *when he perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out, &c.*

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. 9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were of the Pharisees'* part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

Observe here, 1. How sad a state, and how bad a condition, was the Jewish church now in, when in the Sanhedrim, or great council, men had power and authority, who believed in no life but this; and what hypocrites were the Pharisees, who could thus incorporate and embody with damnable heretics, the Sadducees, and yet at the same time hated and persecuted the christians. The Sadducees were so far from believing that there was any spirit, that they blasphemously maintained, that God himself was no spiritual, but only a corporeal being. When men sin with obstinacy against supernatural light, God justly withdraws from them even natural light, and suffers them to fall from one degree of error to another. Observe, 2. How partiality will change men's judgments, according to the interest of a party or faction. The Pharisees were bitter enemies to the apostle; but, because he owned himself of their sect, they instantly take part with him, and cry, *We find no fault with him.* The feuds about religion are commonly the

sharpest feuds; men are more fond of the notions of their brains, than they are of the issue of their bodies. *Odia Religiosorum sunt acerbissima*; "Religious hates are hottest." Observe, 3. How the dissensions of God's adversaries oft-times become the deliverance of God's servants. Thus here the Pharisees and Sadducees quarrel about the resurrection: the Pharisees justify St. Paul, and tell them that oppose him, "They are in danger of fighting against God." Thus God, when he pleaseth, can find or make patrons of his people, and raise up friends from amongst his very enemies, to defend his cause.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from amongst them, and to bring *him* into the castle. 11 And the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

St. Paul was now in the midst of difficulty and danger; but observe how seasonably God steps in for his succour and deliverance: First, he stirs up that heathen tribune, the chief captain Lysias, who was present at the trial, to see his prisoner have fair play; the Lord stirs up this man to rescue the apostle from the hands of violence, by which he was in danger of being pulled in pieces, and he is returned safe unto the castle again. O how God's encouragements evermore accompany his commands! His faithful servants, when they suffer for him, shall certainly be delivered by him, either in trouble or out of trouble. Secondly, God comforts the suffering apostle with his own presence, and with the gracious manifestations of his special favour; *The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul.*—Where note, That if the Lord stand by, and be graciously present with his servants, in a suffering hour, it is no matter how many and how mighty they be that do withstand them, and appear against them. No doubt these words, *Be of good cheer, Paul,* turned the apostle's prison into a palace, yea, into a paradise, and enabled him to bid a bold defiance to all the devilish designs of

the Jews in Jerusalem against him; having got such good security for his safety, even from God himself, in the faith of which our apostle holily triumphs, saying, *If God be for us, who can be against us*: Rom. viii. 31. That is, none can be against us, either safely or successfully. The presence of God with his suffering servants outweighs all their discouragements.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying, That they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. 15 Now therefore, ye, with the council, signify to the chief captain, that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him; and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

Observe here, 1. A barbarous and bloody plot, a cursed combination and conspiracy, against the life of the innocent and useful apostle: no sooner was it daylight, but the wicked Jews bind themselves by an oath, never to eat or drink more, until they eat the apostle's flesh, and drink his blood. *Thus the wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth*, Psal. xxxvii. 12. Observe, 2. The numbers which were engaged in this conspiracy: more than forty, they all agreed as one man. Lord, how numerous, how unanimous, how resolute and outrageous, are the enemies of thy holy religion, to carry on their cursed contrivances for the extirpation of it! Thus was it here; these enemies were numerous, *more than forty*. The devil's designs never miscarry for want of fit instruments: he has a party ever ready to oppose the gospel in every place. And as they were unanimous, as well as numerous, they combined together in one cursed bond: here was unity, but not an unity in the truth, but a conspiracy against it; here was the agreement and friendship, but it was like that of Herod and Pilate

against Christ, and not for him; and they were resolute and outrageous, *They bound themselves under a curse*, under a bloody vow, to pursue their purpose of murdering the apostle. It has been the old policy of the enemies of the church to oblige and bind themselves by oaths and execrations, by leagues and associations, to carry on their wicked and bloody designs against the church. *They were more than forty which made this conspiracy*. Observe, 3. The quality of the persons which were engaged in this bloody purpose: they were the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul, and a life after death. And they apply themselves to the high-priest, and Sanhedrim or great council, not doubting of his and their readiness to join with them. O what a low ebb was the Jewish religion now at! What an high-priest and priesthood was there, that must head a confederacy of murdering Sadducees! How great was the degeneracy of the Jewish church, when their chief priests were thus ready to comply with, and contribute their best assistance to, such a cruel crew of cut-throats and bloody assassins! But they had almost filled up the measure of their sins, and their final destruction was nearapproaching. Observe, lastly, What craft and cruelty, what fraud and force, are here found and combined together in the church's enemies. The council must court the captain, that he bring down his prisoner, *as though they would enquire something more perfectly concerning him*. Thus was the plot against the apostle's life laid craftily as well as cruelly: under a pretence of having the prisoner re-examined, they contrive to have him brought down from the castle, and in his way to the council they combined together for his destruction. Lord, abate the power of the church's enemies, since their malice cannot be abated!

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain; for he hath a certain thing to tell him. 18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto

thee. 19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me? 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee, that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. 21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lay in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

Note here, 1. That no conspiracies are or can be kept secret from God, who can both detect them, and defeat them at his pleasure. Note, The remarkable providence of God in bringing this conspiracy to the knowledge of St. Paul's sister's son: he was perhaps by, when the conspirators were contriving the mischief, and overheard them. It is happy for the innocent, that the malicious cannot keep their own counsel. God oftentimes causeth the tongues of his people's enemies to fall upon themselves, and they discover the wicked purposes of their hearts, which none but themselves were privy to. Note, 3. How the hearts of all men are in the hand of the Lord, and how he turneth them as he pleaseth. This is evident from the chief captain's great humanity towards St. Paul, and his courteous humility towards his sister's son, taking the youth by the hand, and as readily giving him both audience and despatch; such a sovereignty and dominion has God over the hearts of men, that he can instantly incline them as he pleaseth, and make even enemies become benefactors at his pleasure.

22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, See *thou* tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me. 23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; 24 And

provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.

Observe here, 1. How wonderfully God overruled the heart of the chief captain, in that he took care both of St. Paul, and the young man also: he bids the young man depart; for had it been known that he had discovered the conspiracy, they had conspired against his life; and had not the chief captain conveyed away the apostle, his enemies, who had been disappointed in this, would have made further attempts against his life. Thus wonderfully doth the good providence of God work for his servants' preservation. Observe, 2. What a strong guard does God raise and set round the apostle for his defence and safety, even a guard of heathen soldiers, to secure him from the Jewish rage; two hundred soldiers, threescore and ten horsemen, and spearmen two hundred. What a royal life-guard was here raised for the apostle's safe-conduct to Cesarea! None of all these soldiers intended him any good; but God made use of them as effectually as if they had the greatest good-will for him. God can make bad persons show kindness to his good servants, and do his will by them who know nothing of his mind and will. When God has work to do, he will find instruments to do it by. And though we see them not, yet are they never the farther off.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting. 27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was told me, how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to lay be-

fore thee what *they had* against him. Farewell.

The chief captain Lysias having sent St. Paul under a strong guard to Cesarea by night, where Felix the Roman governor resided, he writes a letter to acquaint Felix with the accusation laid to the prisoner's charge. In which letter observe, 1. The title given to the Roman governor, *Most excellent; Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix, sendeth greeting.* Titles of civil honour and respect given to persons in place and power are agreeable to the mind and will of God. There is an honour which belongs to men, with respect to their external degree and place, when none is due to them with respect to their internal qualifications. He that is very honourable as to his place, may not deserve any honour as to his worth; yet ought he to be honoured so far as his place requireth. Observe, 2. How God overruled the heart and pen of this captain, Lysias, to do the apostle right, in representing his case fairly and indifferently: that he found nothing brought against him that was punishable, either with death or bonds, by the Roman law. Observe, 3. How triflingly he speaks of the great things in question concerning our blessed Redeemer's death and resurrection, as also of the whole gospel: he calls them, undervaluingly, *questions of their law.* As the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, so the manifold wisdom of God is accounted and esteemed folly by the ignorant and blind world. Yet observe, 4. How God overruled his very slighting of these controversies in dispute for the apostle's advantage: he being by that means preserved from the rage of the Jews. *When this man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed by them, I came with an army and rescued him.* Behold how God accomplishes his own designs for the preservation of his servants, by the hands of those from whom destruction could rather have been expected. Thus here, God made use of an heathen captain to rescue and defend the apostle from the enraged Jews, who send him under a strong guard, with a friendly letter in favour of him, to Felix the governor at Cesarea, where he gives notice to his accusers to impeach him face to face. Blessed be God, that our times are in his hands, not in our enemies' hands, nor yet in our own; until we have finished the work which God

designed us, neither men nor devils can take us off.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle, 38 Who, when they came to Cesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia: 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall.

The apostle being brought before Felix the Roman governor, although he was an heathen, yet he showed the apostle far more favour than his own countrymen the Jews: for, observe, 1. His affability to St. Paul, *in asking him of his country.* 2. His justice; he would not judge him till he had his accusers face to face, *I will hear thee when thine accusers are come.* If it be enough to accuse, who can be innocent? and if it be sufficient to deny, who would be found guilty? Magistrates must know a cause, before they give sentence or judgment about it; otherwise, though they pronounce a right sentence, it is not in judgment, but by accident. Magistrates must be stars, as well as ministers; they must do nothing blindfold, or blindly. Observe, 3. His great favour towards the apostle, in committing him a prisoner, not to the common gaol, but to Herod's palace; a fair prison, if a place of confinement may be so called. The Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, though of his own country, and of his own religion, yet were not so kind to him as Felix the heathen governor.

Thus the chapter concludes with an account of the apostle's wonderful deliverance from the Jews at Jerusalem, who conspired his destruction; together with the instrumental means and manner of it. In the next chapter we find him brought to Cesarea, tried before Felix, making a defence for himself, and so reasoning that Felix trembled. Behold a prisoner at liberty, and his judge in bonds!

CHAP. XXIV.

In the beginning of this chapter we find St. Paul brought to his trial before Felix, the Roman governor; a famous trial, at which the plaintiff was Ananias the high-priest, and several members of the Sanhedrim; the defendant, St. Paul; the judge, Felix: the emperor's attorney general, Tertullus; and the indictment drawn up against the prisoner, heresy and sedition. From which imputation the apostle clears himself; and in the end of the chapter makes a declaration of his faith, and gives an account of the holiness and innocency of his life.

**A**ND after five days, Ananias the high-priest descended, with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

Observe here, How Ananias the high-priest, with the elders or heads of the Jewish council at Jerusalem, travel from thence to Cæsarea, a great many miles, to inform the government against St. Paul; *After five days Ananias descended, &c.* The devil's drudges stick at no pains, spare for no cost, in doing his drudgery. A persecuting spirit claps wings to a person, it makes him swift in his motion, and zealous in his application and endeavours. Observe, 2. How the high-priest carrieth with him one of their most eminent and eloquent advocates, to implead the innocent apostle. Satan never miscarries in any of his enterprises and wicked designs for want of fit tools to carry them on. He hath his Tertullus, an eloquent orator, ready, who could tune his tongue any way for a large fee. *Ananias descended, with a certain orator named Tertullus, &c.*

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

Observe here, St. Paul the prisoner being called forth, Tertullus, the orator, began to show his art by a flattering insinuation, which mightily prevails with men of mean

and corrupt minds. There is no cause so foul and bad, but some will be found to plead it; yea, to justify and defend it. And if so, judges had need be wise, as the angels of God, discerning between truth and falsehood. Observe farther, How Tertullus seeks to gain the judge's favour by flattery and falsehood: to win judges by flattery hath ever by false accusers been taken for the surest way of success; but after all, flattery is a very provoking and wrath-procuring sin; and it is hard to say, which is most dangerous, to receive flattery or to give it. When men give much glory to man, 'tis hard for man to give that glory back again to God. 'Tis hell and death to flatter sinners, or suffer ourselves to be flattered by them. Observe lastly, That bad government is better than no government; tyranny itself is better than anarchy. The Jews were not now their own masters, but tributaries to the Romans. Yet Tertullus acknowledges, many worthy deeds were done unto their nation by the prudence of the Roman governor: "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix."

5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. 7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, 8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom, thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him. 9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

Tertullus having prepared the judge, presently falls upon the matter, and charges St. Paul with being a pestilent fellow, a seditious person, a disturber of the nation, a profaner of the temple, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. And adds, that out of mere zeal to the Jewish religion, they had themselves before now despatched him cut of the way, but that he was vio-

lently rescued out of their hands by Lysias the chief captain, and brought thither to be tried. Concluding, that these things which he had spoken, were the sense of all those that came down with him as witnesses, ver. 9. *The Jews also assented, and said that these things were so.* Here note, 1. What an heavy load of reproaches and false accusations our innocent apostle laboured under; he is accounted, and called, a walking pestilence. Thus the holy and faithful servants of God are esteemed by the world, the plague and bane of the place and nation where they live: although it is really for their sakes that God staves off plagues and judgments from falling upon the world; *We have found this man a pestilent fellow.* It is not the greatest holiness towards God, nor righteousness towards men, that can sufficiently shield and defend a saint from censure and slander, from calumny and false accusation. Note, 2. Besides the general charge, that the apostle was the very pest and plague of mankind; we have a threefold accusation brought against him, That he was a mover of sedition, a profaner of the temple, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Lord, how should thy faithful ministers and ambassadors prepare themselves for, and comfort themselves under, the most hellish reproaches, when we find the great apostle, (whom St. Chrysostom honours with this character, "*That the earth never bare a better man since it bare our Redeemer;*") yet thus misalled and accounted a pest, a plague, the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things! O why should such worthless worms as we murmur, when we meet with much less reproaches! Lord! help us in imitation of thy example, for the joy that is set before us, to despise the shame, as well as to endure the cross. The best men that ever the world had, have fallen under the lashes of evenvenomed tongues. What foul aspersions hath malice cast upon innocency itself! Our blessed Saviour, in the clearest act of innocency, his casting out of devils, suffered the most horrid imputation, even of *casting out devils through Beelzebub the prince of devils*, Matt. ix. 34. Now the servant must not expect to be above his master: if Christ thus suffered, needs must christianity, needs must christians, needs must ministers and ambassadors.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to

speak, answered, *Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:* 11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Our apostle, being accused of three notorious crimes, namely, *sedition, heresy, and profanation of the temple,* answers distinctly to every one of them. Where observe, 1. How undaunted innocency is in a good person, and in a good cause; St. Paul was so far from being daunted by the greatness of his enemies, or by the vehemency of their accusation, that he tells the governor, he did *with all cheerfulness* undertake his defence. Observe, 2. How the apostle answers distinctly to the particulars of his accusation. And first, As to the crime of sedition, charged upon his person. Secondly, As to the crime of heresy, charged upon his religion. As to the former, the crime of sedition, this is a very infamous charge: what schism is in matters ecclesiastical, that is sedition in matters temporal and civil. As the one violates the peace of the church, so doth the other the peace of the commonwealth. Sedition is committed three ways; by the head, by the tongue, and by the hand. A seditious head plots and contrives mischief, a seditious tongue vents it, and a seditious hand executes it. None of these ways was the apostle guilty of sedition, he never employed his head to contrive, nor his tongue to utter, nor his hand to practise, any thing that tended that way; yet he is charged with it, *We have found this fellow a mover of sedition.* Learn thence, It is no new stratagem to represent the faithful servants of God as enemies to states and kingdoms, as disturbers of the peace, as troublers of Israel, as trumpets of rebellion, as movers of sedition, on purpose to bring them into hatred with princes, that they may fall under the sword of the magistrate as malefactors, and be looked upon as persons unworthy to live. But how

does St. Paul free himself from the charge and imputation of sedition? Thus, 1. By demonstrating the improbability of it; how unlikely it was, that he who came up to the temple to worship God, and to bring alms to the poor, and was in Jerusalem but a very few days, and did not so much as dispute either in the temple or in the synagogues, should yet stir up the people to sedition. 3. He puts his adversaries upon proof of their articles, ver. 13. *Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.* From the apostle's practice in clearing his own innocence, we learn, That it is a piece of justice which every man owes to himself, to vindicate and clear his reputation from all guilt falsely imputed to him, and especially from that of sedition.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets :

Here the apostle answers the second part of the charge brought against him; namely, the charge of heresy, and being the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Where note, That although the apostle would not, out of his great modesty, take upon himself to be one of the heads or chiefs among them, a ringleader, as they styled him; yet as to the owning of that way, notwithstanding all the imputations they had cast upon it, he doth it with the greatest freedom and courage, in the presence of his judge and accusers; *This I confess, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I, &c.* Here observe, 1. The false imputation which christianity suffered under in its first appearance; *After the way which they call heresy.* It is no new thing to nickname the worshippers of the true God, to call them heretics, and their way to worship heresy. Observe, 2. The way taken by St. Paul to remove this false imputation; namely, by an appeal to scripture and antiquity: *So worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets.* Where note, how he appeals to scripture as the ground and rule of his faith, the law and the prophets; and then he appeals to the best and purest antiquity for the object of his worship; *So worship I*

*the God of my fathers.* Observe, 3. The freedom and courage of the apostle in owning his religion, notwithstanding these false imputations, even in the presence of his greatest enemies, and when they were in hopes to destroy him for it; *This I confess unto thee.* The apostles abhorred that mean and base-spirited principle, which makes it lawful for men to deny their religion when it brings them into danger: no, he valued his above, and preferred it before, his personal safety. God Almighty inspire us with the same courage and holy resolution, that when our adversaries of the church at Rome pronounce us heretics, and call our religion heresy, we may answer them as our apostle answered their forefathers, the subtle Pharisees, *After the way which you call heresy, so worship we the God of our fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets.*

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.

Our apostle had made a free and open profession of his religion in the foregoing verse, *After the way called heresy do I worship the God of my fathers.* Here at the 15th verse he asserts the doctrine of the resurrection, which was a principal article both of the Jewish and the christian religion; *I have hope toward God, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.* And having made a declaration of his faith, ver. 14, 15. he next gives an account of his life, at verse 16. *Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.* Observe here, 1. What is the principle and guide of a good man's actions; and that is, conscience. The word and law of God is the rule of our actions, but conscience is the immediate guide and director of them. Observe, 2. The extent of a good man's pious practice: *To keep a conscience void of offence toward God and man.* To exercise a faithful care in performing the duties of both tables, is both an argument of our sincerity, and an



argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession. Observe, 3. The apostle's constancy and perseverance in this course; *to have always a conscience void of offence.* We must not make conscience of our duty by fits and starts; but in the whole course and tenor of our lives and actions. Religion should be a constant frame and temper of mind. Observe, 4. The apostle's earnest care and endeavour to this purpose, *Herein do I exercise myself.* The original word is of an intense signification, and denotes the apostle's applying his mind, in good earnest, to be thoroughly instructed in all the parts and points of his duty, and his being very careful and conscientious in the discharge and performance of it. Observe, 5. What was the apostle's great motive and encouragement to do all this; namely, the belief of the resurrection, and the future state of rewards and punishments consequent upon it. Because *I hope for a resurrection both of the just and unjust*; therefore, *do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence.* If we believe the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment to come, we shall be very careful to discharge a good conscience now, in order to the rendering a good account of ourselves then. Happy man, who, when he goes into another world, carries with him thither a conscience clear of all guilt, either by innocence or by repentance! For verily at the hour of death, to be free from stings and upbraidings, from the terrors and tortures, from the confusion and amazement, of a guilty conscience, is a happiness so desirable, that it is well worth the care and best endeavours of our whole life. May the apostle's exercise be our daily practice, namely, To keep a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward all men!

17 Now after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. 18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult: 19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me. 20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil-doing in me, while I stood before the council; 21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among

them, Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day.

The apostle had vindicated himself from the charge and imputation of sedition and heresy before; he comes now to clear himself of the third charge, namely, the profanation of the temple; in order whereunto he declares, that he had not been a long time at Jerusalem before this journey: and that he now came to bring alms to the poor Jews that were converted to christianity: he acknowledges that at this time he went into the temple, yet not to profane it, but to perform those rites in it which the law of the Jews required of such as had the vow of Nazarites upon them. Thus the apostle cleared himself of all that was objected against him, and made it evidently appear to the face of his enemies, that all the accusations brought against him were false and clamorous. Learn thence, That generally the accusations laid by the malicious to the charge of the innocent, are nothing but empty noise and clameur. Having thus vindicated himself to their faces, he next makes an appeal to the consciences of his accusers; whether there was any thing of moment charged upon him more than this, That he professed and believed the resurrection of the dead. Thus bravely did the apostle plead his own cause here, or rather the Spirit of God that spake in him, though Satan had got the high priest Ananias, and his eloquent orator Tertullus, to implead and impeach St. Paul; yet behold with what a flood of truth and eloquence doth the apostle vindicate his own innocence. *Magna est Veritas & prevalebit*: "Great is the truth, and will finally prevail."

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief Captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. 23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or to come unto him.

The sense of this is, "When Felix understood and discerned how things went, he would not pass any sentence in the case at

present; but put them off, saying, *When I have got a more perfect knowledge of this way of christianity*, and when I have spoken with Lysias, and understand the truth concerning the tumult, I will then determine the difference between you: in the mean time the captain of the guard shall have the prisoner in custody, to gratify the Jews." Where observe, both the equity and clemency of Felix the judge: his equity, in that he would not pronounce sentence before he had thoroughly and fully understood the matter of fact; his clemency, in suffering the apostle to be a prisoner at large, and allowing his friends and acquaintance liberty to come and visit him. Behold the former rigour towards the apostle mercifully relaxed; he is no more confined to a close dungeon, but goes abroad with a chain and a keeper, and none of his friends are forbidden either to visit him or relieve him. Thus God, in an unexpected hour, casts such outward comforts to his suffering saints and servants, as he sees will do them most good; yea, and can cause his and their enemies to become contributors thereunto.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

This chapter now concludes with the apostle's famous sermon before Felix his judge, in which we have considerable, the preacher, the hearers, the text or subject preached upon, and the successful effect of the sermon. Observe, 1. The preacher, St. Paul; *As Paul reasoned*. The apostle now was in bonds, yet had liberty to preach, and he preached with liberty, with great boldness and freedom of speech, though under great disadvantages; his person imprisoned, his reputation blotted and defamed, loaded with calumnies and odious imputations; yet under all these disadvantages the apostle preaches. Observe, 2. His hearers, Felix and his wife Drusilla; Felix, a bad man, guilty of bribery, &c. Drusilla, a vile woman, forsook her own husband, and lived in adultery with Felix, as Josephus says. Here were a pair of hopeful hearers! yet St.

Paul boggles not to preach to them, as bad as they were, hoping to make them better. Learn thence, That the gospel must be preached by us, when we are lawfully called thereunto, whatever the persons be that make up the auditory; we know not what persons, or in what hour, God may call. Observe, 3. The text or subject-matter preached upon: righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. Where the wisdom of the preacher appears by the suitableness of the subject; the apostle chose a very proper subject for them both. Felix was guilty of bribery, or at least was ready to commit it; for the next verse tells us, That he hoped to have money given him by Paul to release him: therefore to him he preaches of righteousness. Drusilla was guilty of incontinence and adultery; to her he preaches of temperance, and to both of a judgment to come. Happy were it, if great offenders had such wise admonishers near them; but too often they meet with flattering parasites, instead of faithful preachers. Observe, 4. The success or effect of the sermon: *Felix trembled*. He trembled, but not believed; he trembled at the guilt of sin, and at the apprehensions of the wrath of God due unto sin; but his trembling did not arise from a holy dread and reverence of the majesty of God speaking to him in and by his word: the word of God can make the proudest and stoutest sinner in the world to quake and tremble. Observe, lastly, How Felix's trembling fit, or sick qualm of conscience, soon went over; he dismisses the preacher for that time, and tells him he will call for him at a more convenient season. But we never read of any such opportunity taken afterwards for that purpose; so dangerous is it to stop our ear at the present call and command of God; if to-day we will not, to-morrow God may say, ye shall not, hear my voice.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27 But after two years, Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

Observe here, What small success the apostle's preaching had, it found and left Felix a bad man: covetousness and bribery were his sins before, and they are so

still; *He hoped that money should be given him of Paul.* That is, he expected a bribe for setting the apostle at liberty, contrary to the law both of God and man. To this covetousness he added cruelty; for though he had nothing to charge Paul with, yet to gratify the Jews *he left Paul bound*; minding the pleasing of men more than the displeasing of God. An hypocrite can become all things to all men, that he may gain by all: but behold the hand of God upon Felix! he that had so unjustly kept Paul for two years, and cruelly left him bound at last, to please and gratify the Jews, is sent a prisoner in bonds himself to Rome, to answer before Nero for his misdemeanors in the managing of his government. A just reward for him who regards the pleasing of men more than the displeasure of God.

### CHAP. XXV.

St. Paul's trial before the Roman governor Felix, was recorded at large in the foregoing chapter. In this we find him brought upon his trial before Festus, who succeeded Felix in the administration of the government. And although Festus could find the apostle guilty of no misdemeanor, yet he had neither the courage nor honesty to set him at liberty, but sends him bound from Cesarea to Rome, as St. Luke relates in this and the following chapters.

**NOW** when Festus was come into the province, after three days, he ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, 3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. 4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*. 5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

St. Luke here informs us, that Festus being come to the government, and going up to Jerusalem, the high-priest and rulers of the Jews quickly began to inform him against Paul, and besought him that he would send for him to Jerusalem, resolving to lay some villains by the way to kill him as he came; but the Divine Providence so overruled the matter, that Festus would

not consent to it, but ordered his accusers to come to Cesarea, and implead him there. Here note, 1. How restless is the rage, and unwearied the malice and enmity, which the persecutors of the truth have against the professors and preachers of it. The high-priest, and chief of the Sanhedrim or ecclesiastical court, continue their murderous designs against the innocent apostle; and are sorry they could not get an heathen governor as cruel as themselves to join with them. Heathens have sometimes blushed at the mention of those crimes, which the professors of religion have committed without either shame or remorse. Note, 2. How deplorably corrupt and degenerate the Jewish church at this time was! Lord, what priests and church-governors were here, who call it *a favour* to have an opportunity granted them to murder an innocent man in cold blood, contrary to the law of nature and of nations! But behold the justice of God upon them; they were now given up to a reprobate sense, and are hurried headlong by a diabolical spirit, a little before their final destruction. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killedst the prophets, and stonedst them that were sent unto thee!* Note, 3. What an overruling Providence was here seen, in that Festus, by no flatteries nor persuasions, would be prevailed with to remove the apostle from Cesarea to Jerusalem. This broke the high-priest's measures, who designed to have killed him by the way. "No, saith Festus, the prisoner shall not come to you, but you shall go to him." This was a marvellous providence for the apostle's preservation. O how easy is it for the most wise God to baffle and blast the most cunning contrivances of the devil; to be-fool the enemies of his church and people, by making the counsels of the wicked to be of no effect! God looks and laughs at all the plots of wicked men against the righteous: frustration and disappointment attend all their designs, and perdition and destruction doth awe their persons, *Psalm ii. 5. He that sitteth in heaven laughs them to scorn, the Lord has them in derision.*

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment-seat, commanded Paul to be brought. 7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem

stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove : 8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cesar, have I offended any thing at all.

Observe here, 1. The equity and justice of Festus, an heathen judge, in his proceedings at St. Paul's trial : he will have the high-priest and elders that accused him speak to his face ; he will have the prisoner brought forth ; and he will have the matter examined by and before himself. When the malicious bring the innocent upon their trial, God will provide a judge for their turn. Observe, 2. The indictment or charge which the Jews brought in against the apostle, That he had offended against the law, profaned the temple, and raised sedition against the Roman government. Here we find the devil at his own trade ; namely, stirring up the rage and malice of the world against the saints of God, under a pretence of their being enemies to the state, and subverters of civil government. Observe, 3. That to be loaded with calumnies and reproaches has been the common lot and constant portion of the friends and servants of Christ, from the first beginning of christianity ; *The Jews laid many and grievous things against Paul, which they could not prove.* Reproach has been the reward of religion and righteousness : but St. Paul easily wipes off the several reproaches cast upon him, affirming himself to have been always a religious observer of the law, that he went into the temple upon a religious account, that he had never taught nor practised any rebellion against Cesar. The servants of Christ are happy in their own innocency, and their adversaries render themselves odious by belying them, and laying that to their charge which every one can disprove.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me ? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Cesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as

thou very well knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die : but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cesar. 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the counsel, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cesar ? unto Cesar shalt thou go.

Observe here, How Festus, being willing to gratify the Jews, asks St. Paul if he would go to Jerusalem, and be tried there, in the Jewish court, about those matters ? The apostle replied, that he was his proper judge, under the Roman emperor, and not the Jews ; and that being a Roman, he might claim the privilege of a Roman, which accordingly he did by appealing unto Cesar. Festus, hearing that, not only admitted his appeal, but was glad of it, to get rid of him without peril on the one hand, or ill will on the other. Here we may remark, 1. That carnal politicians do not so much consider what is just and righteous in its own nature, as what is of use and advantage to themselves, be it right or wrong. The apostle had cleared himself from all slanderous accusations ; and yet *Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure,* would not set him at liberty. It is too often the practice of corrupt judges, that they may please the people, to deliver up truth to be injuriously crucified ; considering more their own interest, than the prisoner's innocency. Note, 2. How the apostle appeals from Jerusalem to Rome, from his own countrymen to heathens ; from the high priest to the emperor Nero ; expecting to find more justice at the hands of infidels, than from the Jewish Sanhedrim. And to this the apostle was in some sort divinely admonished by Christ himself, to make his appeal. Acts xxiii. 11. *Be of good cheer, Paul, thou shalt bear witness to me at Rome.* Doubtless, this was a mighty support and strong consolation to him, to know that he appealed and desired to go to Rome, where God had appointed to have him go.

13 And after certain days, king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cesarea to salute Festus. 14 And when they had been there many

days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix ; 15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. 16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. 17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay, on the morrow I sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth : 18 Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed : 19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. 21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cesar.

Observe here, 1. How God will not be wanting to his servants in their greatest straits and sufferings, but will providentially dispose of all matters in order to their deliverance, when it may most conduce to his own glory and their good. Thus here, king Agrippa comes to congratulate Festus ; Festus declares the cause of God's oppressed servant to the king, and God makes use both of Festus and Agrippa to screen the apostle from the violence of his enemies : *In the mount will the Lord be seen* ; the people's extremities are the seasons of his succour. Observe, 2. How the very light of nature in and among the heathens condemns it as an act of manifest and notorious injustice in a judge to pass sentence upon a person unheard, and unallowed to make his defence. This baseness was below the Roman gal-

lanty whilst Pagans ; Festus demands the accusers and the accused to appear face to face ; and yet such a diabolical spirit of malice had so blinded the Jews, that, contrary to the law of nature, and the law of all nations, they would have had St. Paul here condemned, without knowing the cause, and hearing his defence. Observe, 3. What base and vile, what low and undervaluing thoughts and apprehensions, have carnal men of the high and holy things of God. Festus here calls the religion and worship, which was of God's own institution, most profanely and contemptuously by the name of superstition : *They had certain questions against him of their own superstition*. And how slightly doth he also speak of our glorified Redeemer, styling him *one Jesus* : But no wonder that the dunghill cocks of the world know not the worth of the pearl of great price.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, Thou shalt hear him. 23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. 24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, O king Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. 27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable, to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

Observe here, 1. King Agrippa's curiosity to see and hear St. Paul : he was born and

bred up amongst the Jews, and probably understood something of the christian religion; and possibly had heard much of Paul, and therefore desired to see him, as Herod desired to see Christ, and to hear John the baptist, only to gratify his curiosity, not to be advantaged by his ministry. Observe, 2. How contemptuously the Holy Ghost speaks of all the pomp, retinue, and state, which Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice, appeared in, at the time and place of hearing: he calls it *fancy*, so the original word signifies, intimating, That all the pomp, gaiety, and glory of the world, is nothing but *fancy*, a dream, and a shadow, having no real existence, but a being in imagination only. Observe, 3. That truth and innocence shine forth the more splendidly by the greater opposition that is raised against them. The more malicious the Jews were in accusing Paul, the more did his innocency appear; and the more was he acquitted and discharged by his judges. Thus we see the providence of God wrought all matters for St. Paul's justification, and for the Jews' reprehension; Festus had nothing to write to Cesar, no crime to inform him of against the apostle. Thence learn, That although God sometimes permits his servants to be laden with slanders and reproaches, yet he will find a time to clear their innocency, and cause their very judges, if not their accusers, to proclaim them guiltless. *I find*, saith Festus, *that he hath committed nothing worthy of death*. It is no small mercy to have our innocency vindicated; for God to clear up our righteousness as the light, and our just dealing as the noon-day; and to free our reputation from those blemishes which the uncharitable suspicions, or rash censures of men, have cast upon us. There is no spot so unbecomful as that upon our credit, saving only a spot upon our consciences. God made the apostle's enemies here do him right, and his name was clothed with honour in the estimation of his very adversaries.

## CHAP. XXVI.

This chapter brings St. Paul to his third trial, namely, before king Agrippa: in which we have the apostle's apology or defensive plea, which he makes for himself against those blind Jews, which did so maliciously persecute him; in which plea he declares, 1. His manner of life before his conversion, which was very pharisaical. 2. The manner of his conversion, which was miraculous and wonderful. 3. His manner of life after his conversion, which was religious and remarkable. Before his conversion he persecuted

the gospel which others had preached; after his conversion he preached the gospel which he himself had persecuted; and the great charge brought against him was this, That of a great opposer he was become a great professor. But the particulars of his defence are before us in the following chapter.

**T**HEN Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: 2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3 Especially, *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

Observe here, 1. The person whom the apostle makes his defence before: Agrippa, Agrippa a king, of whom he begs the favour patiently to hear him. It is a great favour for great men so much as to hear an innocent, good man plead for himself; Agrippa, who, by reason of his birth and breeding among the Jews, was acquainted with the scriptures, the law, and the prophets. Observe, 2. How the providence of God wonderfully procures St. Paul a liberty to speak for himself: hereby he had an opportunity at once to make known his case, and to publish the gospel. But note farther, That as the providence of God procured him liberty, so the good Spirit of God gave him ability to speak efficaciously and effectually, with such evidence and demonstration, that he not only took the ears but captivated the consciences of the whole court, and almost persuaded the king himself to turn christian.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, 5 Which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify,) that, after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.

Here the apostle begins his defence, with a relation of the innocency and strictness of his life before his conversion: he did and could appeal to all that knew him, concerning the unblamableness of his conversation. Thence note, That an innocent

and blameless life from our youth upwards, is a singular support and encouragement to us in a suffering hour, especially when we are called forth to suffer for religion and righteousness' sake. Observe farther, The instance which the apostle gives of his strictness in religion: *After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.* Of all the sects among the Jews, there was none that took up such an extraordinary strict way of religion as the Pharisees; of this sect was St. Paul, before converted to christianity, and in this he rested for salvation. Thence learn, 1. That an extraordinary strict way taken up in religion, is thought by many a sure and sufficient foundation for their eternal salvation. Learn, 2. That many may rest upon a strict way of religion, which yet cometh not up to, but is oft-times besides, the appointment of the word of God. The Pharisees, for their unusual and supererogating way of exactness, concluded that they should certainly go to heaven, if any did; when, alas! many things which they practised with extraordinary zeal and strictness, were never required by God at their hands.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7 Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come: for which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Our apostle had vindicated his life before, his doctrine now: he tells Agrippa, That for believing, expecting, and preaching the doctrine of the resurrection, he was questioned of the Jews; this he calls the *hope of the promise made by God unto the fathers.* Others understand it of the promise of the Messias, which was made unto the fathers, and was generally depended upon by the most pious among the twelve tribes scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth; and in the faith and expectation whereof they fervently served God night and day. Learn thence, 1. That the pious and godly among the Jews lived in hopes of the Messias' appearing, of a glorious resurrection by him, and of an eternal life and salvation with him. 2. That their hope of this promised mercy did cause them to serve God instantly day and night. Hope is the great exciter of industry and

endeavour; expectation puts it upon action; hope of obtaining is the motive to every undertaking: the christian's hope, or thing hoped for, is great and excellent in the esteem, namely, eternal life, and where the esteem is high, the endeavour will be strong. The christian, who has a well-grounded belief and hope of a life to come, will serve God with an unwearied diligence and industry; if by any means he may attain the fruition and enjoyment of it: *Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.*

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

As if the apostle had said, "The great point in controversy between me and you is this, Whether the dead in general shall arise? and, Whether Christ in particular be risen from the dead? Now why should either seem incredible to you? Is it too hard for God, who made the world, and upholds the world, and gives life to all living; is it too hard or difficult for him to raise the dead? If not, why should it be thought incredible or impossible?" Learn hence, That the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, is neither incredible, nor impossible, neither against right reason nor true faith.

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Here the apostle frankly declares, That he was once as sharp and bitter an enemy to Christ, and to all that believed in him, as any one whatever; and thought himself bound in conscience to persecute all that owned him, and with threatenings and tortures compelled them to deny Christ; and being exceedingly fierce, he forced them to

fly to heathen cities to escape his fury. Where note, 1. That we ought to be upon very good and sure grounds, before we oppose and persecute any. 2. That some persecute others, and at the same time think they do well in so doing: *I verily thought*, says the apostle, *that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus*. He spake as if his conscience would have troubled him, unless he had troubled others, for that which was indeed their conscience. Note, 3. That Paul, being a blasphemer himself, compelled the professors of the gospel to blaspheme. This he probably did two ways. First, by his example; they imitated him in blaspheming, or speaking evil of the ways of Christ. Or, secondly, by his cruelty: vexing them so in the profession of Christ, that some who were unsettled probably fell away, and blasphemed the name of Christ, which they had professed: *He compelled them to blaspheme*. There is a compelling power and constraining force in example, especially in the example of persons in power and authority. Men sin with a kind of authority: Paul's blasphemous example compelled others to blaspheme.

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *It is hard* for thee to kick against the pricks. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

Our apostle having declared his manner of life before conversion, proceeds next to declare the extraordinary manner of his conversion: He tells Agrippa, that as he went with a persecuting purpose towards Damascus, at mid-day, a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shined, round about him, and when they were all fallen prostrate on the earth, he heard a voice speaking to him in the Hebrew tongue, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*

*It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*. Here note, 1. How restless and unwearied persecutors are in the execution of their bloody designs and purposes: Paul, as he thought, had swept and cleansed Jerusalem of saints before; after which he resolves to ransack Damascus, and undertakes a long journey, of five or six days, in order to that end: the worst journey that ever he intended, but the best that ever he undertook; a journey most maliciously purposed by him, but most mercifully disposed by God; and accordingly he is met with in the way: Christ appears to him, a sudden beam of light shines round about him, and a voice is heard by him, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* that is, *me in my members*. Such as persecute saints for their sanctity, persecute Christ himself, and he can no more endure to see them wronged than himself; as the honour of the head redounds to the members, so the sorrows of the members are resented by the head: Christ said not thus to his murderers on earth, "Why bind ye me? Why buffet ye me? Why scourge ye and crucify me?" But here, when his members suffer, he cries out from heaven, *Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Lord, thou art more tender of thy body mystical, than thou wert of thy body natural; more sensible of thy members' sufferings than of thine own.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.

St. Paul had given king Agrippa an account of his miraculous conversion in the former verses; in these he declares to him his extraordinary commission to preach the gospel; that Christ, who appeared to him from heaven, chose him to be a preacher



as well as a professor of the gospel, assuring him that he would stand by him, and deliver him from the persecutions both of Jews and Gentiles, to whom he should send him, and would bless his endeavours to the opening of the eyes of their understanding, and to the turning of them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive, by faith in Christ, remission of sins, and a portion of the heavenly inheritance among such as are regenerated by his Spirit. Here note,

1. The honour which God is pleased to put upon the ministry of the word, his own ordinance: the apostle, who was only the instrument, is said to open the eyes of the blind, and turn sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: all which is properly and principally the work of the Spirit of Christ; yet he is pleased to put this honour upon his instruments, the ministers, by whom he worketh all this, and for which reason they are called co-workers, or workers together with Christ. Note, 2. The apostle's mission, *I send thee*. Great is the dignity of gospel-ministers, they are God's messengers; their commission is sealed by the whole Trinity, and intimates both their dignity and duty.

To intimate their holiness, they are called men of God; for their vigilancy, watchmen; for their courage, they are called soldiers; for their painfulness, harvest labourers; for their care of the flock, shepherds; for their wisdom, overseers; for their industry, husbandmen; for their patience, fishermen; for their tenderness, nurses; for their affectionateness, fathers and mothers; for their faithfulness, stewards. A very high and honourable calling; the Son of God despised it not. Note, 3. St. Paul's commission in the several branches of it. 1. *To open their eyes*; that is, to enlighten their understandings, that they may know God and their duty to him: in order to which there is required, 1. Ability in the preachers; how can they open the eyes of others who are blind and ignorant themselves? Ought not they that undertake to be guides and leaders, very well to know the way themselves? 2. Perspicuity in the sermon: What hope can there be of opening men's understandings, when the matter delivered is closed up from them? It was St. Paul's aim to speak words easy to be understood, and it should be ours; it is the same thing to preach in an unknown tongue as in an unknown style, above the reach of our hearers. Painted

glass is more costly, but the plain glass is the clearer and more useful. But we must take care, that though we come in plainness, yet not in rudeness of speech. The second part of St. Paul's commission was, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: in order to which he was turned from these himself. He has little reason to expect that God will honour his ministry for the conversion of others from sin and Satan, who is under the dominion of both himself. The minister's life is the people's looking-glass, by which they usually dress themselves. Note, 4. The happy fruit of St. Paul's mission and commission both. *That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified*. Wherever true repentance is wrought by the ministry of the word, there is forgiveness attained, and a title to the inheritance of heaven attained with it. Note, lastly, A threefold metaphorical description of the sinful state of nature before conversion, and the like of a state of grace after conversion. The state of nature is a state of blindness, *To open their eyes*. A state of darkness, *To turn them from darkness to light*. A state of slavery, *And from the power of Satan unto God*. The state of grace after conversion is set forth by sight, light, and liberty. All this is Christ's work originally, but his ministers' work instrumentally: *I have sent thee to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21 For these causes, the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. 22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the

dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Observe here, 1. How obedient the apostle was to the call of Christ: having had so glorious a vision, he did not, he durst not, rebel against the light of it: but immediately went forth and preached, first at Damascus, then at Jerusalem, then throughout all Judea, and at last among the Gentiles, the doctrine of repentance, and the necessity of good works. Observe, 2. The ill requital which the good man met with for his diligence and faithfulness in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel: for this he had like to have been killed by the Jews in the temple. *Evangelium prædicare est furorem mundi in se derivare*: "To preach the gospel is the ready way to bring the wrath and fury of the world upon themselves." Observe, 3. With what thankfulness the apostle owns and acknowledges the merciful providence of God in preserving him both from the fraud and force of his enemies: *Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day*. And how did the sense of divine goodness upon his soul provoke him to go on with his work, declaring no other thing concerning Christ, but what Moses and the prophets did of old foretell of him; namely, that he should be put to death, and should be the first that should rise again by his own power, and be the author of our resurrection. Note here, That the sufferings of Christ were taught by Moses in all the commands given about sacrifices; and not by Moses only, but by the prophets also, particularly the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. the evangelical prophet, and prophetic evangelist, who wrote as clearly of Christ's coming, as if he had then been come. From whence the apostle argueth, how black the wickedness of the Jews was, who went abroad to kill him for preaching the same doctrine which Moses and the prophets had taught before him.

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26 For the king knoweth of these things; before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these

things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

Hitherto Festus had heard the apostle with great patience, but now he interrupts him, and tells him, he talks like a man that was crazed. Carnal minds pass very uncharitable censures upon spiritual persons and spiritual things. Christ's kindred said, *he was beside himself*, Mark iii. 21. Festus here judged Paul to be mad, thinking that he had over-studied himself: by meddling with matters too high for his capacity, and too deep for his understanding, he had brought himself into a deep melancholy; *Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning hath made thee mad*. But observe with what meekness and due terms of respect the apostle replied to this reviling governor, *I am not mad, most noble Festus*. Here observe, 1. The title of honour given to Festus, not so much to his person, for that was unworthy, as to his office, which was truly honourable, *Most noble Festus*. Titles of respect and honour, given to persons in place and power, are agreeable to the mind of God, and countenanced by christianity. Observe, 2. What an happy victory and conquest the apostle had over his own passions; he waves the reflections Festus had made upon him; and had learned of his master, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. It is an happy attainment for a man to be master of himself under a provocation, to be regulated by right reason, and not hurried by blind passion.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

The apostle, knowing that Agrippa was educated among the Jews, tells him that he could not but hear of the life, doctrine, miracles, death, and resurrection, of Christ; all which were done openly, and not in corners: and he could not but believe the prophets, and what they had foretold concerning the Messiah; and if the power of worldly interest did not overcome him, his life and practice would be answerable to his faith and belief. Thence learn, That a right belief of the holy scriptures is of great efficacy and force to conform a person's life to the practice of real and universal holiness.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian. 29 And Paul said, I

would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Observe here, 1. What an efficacy St. Paul's doctrine had upon Agrippa: though he would not be converted, yet he could not but be convinced; his conscience was touched, though his heart was not renewed. Learn thence, That there is certainly that in religion which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the consciences of ungodly men. Observe, 2. How sad it is, when persons have enjoyed the scriptures, the preaching of the word, and all means of salvation, and yet are but almost christians, and shall never enjoy the least salvation; they are within sight of heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God. Observe, 3. That such as will be christians indeed, must not only be almost, but altogether christians: *I would that you, and all that hear me, says the apostle, were altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* Where note, The extraordinary charity and christian compassion of St. Paul: he wishes them his graces, not his chains; he did not wish them his bonds and imprisonment, but he wished them the same liberty and enlargement by Jesus Christ, which he enjoyed; he would keep his sorrows and outward troubles to himself, but wishes they were acquainted with his inward consolations and comforts. A good man wishes others as well as he wishes himself; and if at any time he wishes that which is penally evil to the worst of his enemies, he doth it with an eye to their spiritual and eternal good. A good man dares not wish ill to those that have actually done ill to him; but wishes, prays, and endeavours the best good for them.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them. 31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cesar.

Observe here, How Agrippa, Festus, and the whole company, acquit the innocent

apostle in their judgments and consciences, yea, with their tongues declare, that he deserved neither death nor bonds; yet at the same time that they acquit him, they discharged him not, but he is left in his enemies' hands, and at last put to death by the Gentiles. But how, may it be said, was God's promise fulfilled then, ver. 16, 17. of this chapter, *I have appeared unto thee, to make thee a minister and a witness, and will deliver thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee?* How did God deliver him from the Gentiles, when he was at last delivered into their hands, and put to death by the Gentiles? Answer, As long as the wisdom of God saw it fit and convenient for the purposes of his glory, and as a real mercy conducing to the apostle's good; as long as it was a true and beneficial deliverance, so long God wrought deliverance for him; nay, rather than fail, in a miraculous manner, no chains could bind him, no iron gates nor prison walls confine him. But when he had finished his course, run his race, fought the good fight of faith, and done the work which God set him about, it would not then have been a deliverance, but a real detriment, to have been kept longer from his reward. Now might the apostle say, Give me my robes and my crown. God now made his word good to the apostle, to deliver him from the people and the Gentiles by making death his deliverer and deliverance. Thus faithful is God in his promises to his people. He will deliver them in six troubles and in seven, in every danger, in every difficulty; but when death is the best deliverance, they shall have it as a covenant-mercy and blessing; for all things are ours, if we be Christ's, whether life or death, 1 Cor. iii. 22.

## CHAP. XXVII.

This chapter gives us an account of St. Paul's voyage from Cesarea to Rome; the providence of God so disposed, that the apostle was not sent by land, lest the Jews should lay lurking in the way to take away his life; but by sea, which though it proved a very dangerous voyage, by reason of tempestuous winds and storms, yet the divine care watched over him, preserved him, and all that were with him, for his sake. A full relation both of the danger and deliverance we have recorded in the chapter now before us.

AND when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Ju-

lius, a centurion of Augustus' band. 2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. 3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

The time being now come for the fulfilling of God's purpose and determinate counsel concerning Paul, recorded Acts xxiii. 11. *Be of good cheer, Paul, as thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem, so shalt thou bear witness also at Rome.* Pursuant to this purpose of God, Festus the Roman governor delivers the apostle and his associates, Luke, Timothy, and Aristarchus, to Julius, in order to their sending, with several other prisoners, who probably were great malefactors, to the city and court of Rome, where all appeals made to the Roman emperor were heard and determined before himself. Now here we have observable, 1. The person whom the apostle was delivered to: Julius, a very civil person to the apostle, who suffered him to see and receive the civilities of his friends. Thus God raises up his people friends in the midst of their sufferings, and when persecutors send his saints to prison, he will provide keepers for their turn. Julius, an heathen soldier, was kinder to him than his own countrymen the Jews. Observe, 2. The villanous company of malefactors and prisoners that the innocent apostle was packed with, *They delivered Paul, and certain other prisoners, to Julius.* Saints and sinners, good and bad, innocent and nocent, share together in the same outward miseries: but though they be thus jumbled together in this world, (where all things come alike to all,) yet the righteous Judge will make a difference between them in the other world, according to their works. Observe, 3. Though the apostle was thus yoked with malefactors and criminals in the ship, yet God favoured him with some companions which were according to his heart's desire; namely, his dear associates, St. Luke, Timothy, and Aristarchus. It is a great comfort to the afflicted to have good companions in their afflictions; *Optimum Solatium est Sodalitium.* But above all, it was the happiness of the apostle that he enjoyed

the presence of God with him in so comfortable a manner, in and under all his sufferings, according to his promise, chap. xviii. 10. *I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.* The gracious special presence of God with his children and people, is a sure and sufficient support unto them in and under all the difficulties and trials, which his wisdom seeth fit to exercise and try them with. Observe, 4. What an additional favour it was from God, that St. Paul found friends in Sidon, such saints as he could comfortably converse with, and receive refreshments from, even needful accommodations for his tedious voyage. Learn hence, That God's care of, his compassion towards, and provision for, his children and people, is universal and perpetual, at all times and in all places.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Mira, a city of Lycia. 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. 7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone: 8 And hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. 9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them; 10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. 11 Nevertheless, the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

An account is here given of the very hazardous voyage which the apostle had from Cesarea towards Rome. He sails from Cesarea to Cyprus; from Cyprus to Cilicia; from Cilicia to Crete; and having

been long at sea, and the summer wearing away, and the great fast being past, that is, the anniversary fast of expiation, which was on the tenth day of September. After which the sea growing tempestuous, the ancients left off sailing until March, because of the shortness of the days. St. Paul, foreseeing the danger of the season, and being also inspired by the Spirit of God, admonished them of the great hazard of the voyage, both to the ship and also to the lives of those that were in it, and advised them to venture no further till the sea was calmer; but the owner and governor of the ship (who was supposed to be better skilled in his own art) advising otherwise, the captain of the guard prefers his judgment before Paul's, and so sets forward, but with great *hazard*, and greater *loss*, as the *event* declared. From the whole we gather, That the fittest seasons ought to be observed and taken for every enterprise, both sacred and secular. Winter journeys by land, or voyages by sea, are unsafe, as well as uncomfortable. A *season* is beautiful for all things, and has a lustre upon it above all other parts of time. This winter voyage, about our October, was very hazardous and unseasonable; for the winds were boisterous and contrary, the days were short, the light little, the night long, the clouds thick, the weather dark, the storms raging; therefore the apostle advised to winter in the Fair Havens, knowing that the season for sailing was now past.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, *and there* to winter; *which is* an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west and north-west. 13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete. 14 But not long after, there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. 15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive. 16 And running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat; 17 Which when they had

taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. 18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship; 19 And the *third day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

The farther difficulties and dangers which the apostle met with, in this winter voyage, are here described and declared, and the properest lessons of instruction which can, I think, be gathered from them, will be by way of allusion. Thus, 1. The ship in which he sailed is an emblem of the church, in her militant state here on earth; she is afflicted, tossed with tempests, and in danger of being shipwrecked every moment; many tempestuous Euroclydons arise suddenly, and threaten her fatally; but her wise pilot sits at the helm, steers her with a fixed eye and steady hand between rocks and shelves, undergirding her by his everlasting arms of power and love which are underneath her; and when in our apprehensions she is brought to a hopeless and helpless state, without the light of sun or stars to comfort her; then doth the Lord enlighten our darkness, and at midnight there shall be light. Again, 2. This voyage, neglected in the summer, and undertaken in the winter season, to the peril of the passengers, and the loss of the ship, lively represents unto us both the folly and danger of persons who suffer the spring of youth and the summer of ripe age to slide and slip away from them; and when the winter of old age comes upon them, then they think of launching forth towards the fair haven of eternal happiness, and not before. Set we forth never so soon, the winds will be contrary, the weather tempestuous, the rocks many, the difficulties great. And yet, Lord! how is our precious time spent and spilt! When age comes upon us, we complain we want time, whereas we foolishly waste it; how are miserable souls that set out late for heaven, (when we can serve sin no longer,) benighted, bewildered, shipwrecked, eternally and irrecoverably lost!—Behold, now only is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no

small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. 21 But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. 22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, 24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25 Wherefore, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me, 26 Howbeit, we must be cast upon a certain island.

Observe here, 1. The hopeless, helpless, comfortless state, which St. Paul, and those in the ship with him, were now reduced to: neither sun nor stars appeared, and the weather proved very tempestuous, and when they utterly despaired of life, then God gives Paul, and he the rest, a comfortable assurance that nothing should be lost, but the vessel only. O how does God delight to deliver those that are forsaken of their hopes; what a present help is he to the helpless! He reserves his holy hand for a dead lift! our extremities are the seasons of his succour. Observe, 2. The great and special favour which God indulged the holy apostle, even to send an angel to him to comfort him: *The angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, said, Fear not.* O what an encouragement is it to us to enter upon, and be faithful in, the service of God, when he causes his holy angels, upon all occasions, to serve us! When visible dangers are before us, God has invisible servants round about us, both to succour and secure us. Lord, help me in sincerity to say, *Thine I am, and thee I serve!* Let me be found faithful in all the instances of my duty to thee, and then shall I find (as the apostle here) that safety evermore accompanies duty. Observe, 3. How God was pleased for St. Paul's sake to save all that were with him in the ship; sinners are spared and saved for the saints' sake, whom

yet they hate and seek to destroy. The wicked are oft-times delivered from temporal destruction for the sake of the godly who live among them, and intercede with God for them; there was two hundred threescore and sixteen persons, all heathens, except three or four, saved for St. Paul's sake, who no doubt begged their lives of God. Lord, what fools and madmen are the wicked, who seek the destruction of those for whose sake it is that they are not themselves destroyed! The breaches which wicked men make by sinning, they make up by praying. Observe, 4. How steady and stedfast the apostle was in the faith and belief of God's promise and providence for his own and the company's preservation: *I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.* We honour God exceedingly, when we depend upon his promise, rely upon his power, believe his word, though what he says be very improbable, and unlikely to come to pass.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country: 28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. 29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. 30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. 32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

A farther account is here given both of the apostle's imminent danger and extraordinary deliverance; for fourteen days together the ship was continually tossed in the sea; at last the mariners cast four anchors out of the ship, and, by the help of a boat, intended to make their escape, leaving the passengers to shift for them-

selves : St. Paul, perceiving this, told the centurion and the soldiers, that, though Almighty God had promised to preserve them, yet they must not expect it without using due means for their own preservation, which was to stay the mariners in the ship ; whose help and diligence, direction and care, would be especially needful to them on such an occasion. Hereupon the soldiers, to prevent the mariners' design, cut the ropes of the boat, and let it fall into the sea. Learn hence, That the end and the means are always joined together in the purpose and decree of God. The same God that ordained the end, ordained the means in order to that end ; therefore, as to trust to means is to neglect God, so to neglect the means is to tempt God. *As here*, That God who decreed that they should not perish with the ship, decreed that the skilful seamen should abide in the ship. Almighty God likes not to be tied to means himself ; but it is his pleasure to tie us. Sometimes, to show his sovereignty, he is pleased to work without means. Sometimes to show his omnipotency, he works against means ; the fire shall not burn, the water shall not drown, the iron shall swim, the sun shall stand still, nay, go several degrees backward. The first cause can suspend the power and operation of second causes, when he pleases. But as the care of the end belongs to God, so the care of the means belongs to us, and must be used when they may, and where they can be used. Accordingly here, the mariners, in order to their own and others' preservation, stay in the ship, lighten the ship, undergird her, cast out their anchors, hoist up the main-sail, loose the rudder-bands, and do every thing in order to their preservation which was needful. The purpose of God to prolong our lives, must not lessen our care for the preservation of our lives ; when God has ordained and appointed means, we cannot expect to find safety in the neglect or contempt of those means.

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing. 34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat : for this is for your health ; for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of

you. 35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all : and when he had broken it, he began to eat. 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat. 37 And we were all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

Observe here, 1. What honour God put upon the holy apostle : although he was a poor prisoner in chains, yet God made him the only counsellor and comforter unto all that were in the ship. First, he adviseth them to eat, because that through consternation of mind, and horror of death, they had made no set meal for fourteen days ; not that they subsisted miraculously without any nourishment at all, but eat so little that it was in a manner continual fasting. Next he becomes the chaplain of the ship, *He gave thanks to God in the presence of them all* ; that is, he desired God's blessing upon what they eat, and praised him for it. Thanks should be returned when benefits are received from the hand of man, much more from the hand of God. What shall we think of those that sit down to a full table as a beast to his forage, without taking any notice of the bountiful hand that feeds them ? St. Paul having thus refreshed himself, and by his example and words encouraged all the rest to do the like, an account is taken of the exact number of persons which were in the ship, and it was found to be two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. Probably this was done at the motion of St. Paul, that so, after their deliverance, it might appear how exactly his prediction, mentioned, ver. 22. *That there shall be no loss of any man's life, nor an hair fall from the head of any*, was verified and fulfilled. Whatever God speaks by the mouth of his holy servants, be it by way of prediction or denunciation, shall certainly be accomplished and come to pass : God is honoured in his truth, when his promises are fulfilled towards his people, and threatenings inflicted on his enemies.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. 39 And when it was day, they knew not the land : but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into

the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. 40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder-bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. 41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the fore part stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. 42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. 43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim, should cast *themselves* first into the sea, and get to land: 44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

Here observe, 1. How willing men in distress are to part with all things for the preservation of life; these sea-faring men are here found three times lightening their ship of her lading and burden: first the merchandise was cast overboard, ver. 18. next all the ship's furniture was heaved over, ver. 19. and now, ver. 38. goes over the very wheat, which they had provided for their daily bread; future provision is cast away to save life at present: life is the most precious treasure, the most excellent thing in nature; a man will part with all the comforts and supports of life, rather than with life itself. Observe, 2. What a wonderful work of God was here upon the hearts of these poor Pagans, thus to venture their lives by parting with their food which they had to live upon, barely upon St. Paul's word, that they should want wheat no more in the ship. Such an influence has God upon the hearts and minds of men, when he pleases to make use of it. Observe, 3. How God's delivering power is most gloriously manifest in the most deplorable extremities of his people. Now, when the ship was fallen into a place where two seas met, when she ran aground, and was broken with the violence of the waves, this

extremity was God's opportunity; and this strait was the season of his succour. Observe, 4. What horrid and cruel ingratitude was found with these wretched soldiers towards the apostle: they design to take away his life, who had taken such care of them, and for whose sake all their lives were preserved! It is no new thing for an unkind world to return evil for good, and hatred for good-will; but to do good and to suffer evil is the christian's exercise at present. *They consulted* to kill the prisoners, (of whom the apostle was chief,) lest any of them should swim out and escape. Observe, 5. How God put into the centurion's heart to defeat their barbarity and bloody counsel, and to save the apostle, for whose sake the centurion and all in the ship were saved. Many are the wicked devices in the heart of man, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. Observe, 6. How God performed his promise to the apostle to a very title: they were all saved, not a man drowned; no not any one of the bloody soldiers who gave counsel to kill Paul. O how good is God to the unthankful and unholy! his tender mercies are over all his works; and how well do sinners fare sometimes for the saints' sake.

Thus, after a long and dangerous voyage, the providence of God brought St. Paul with the rest of the passengers at last safe to shore. O how punctual is God to what he promises! What he foretells he will fulfill. He had foretold by Paul, that they should suffer shipwreck, and at last he cast upon a certain island: and accordingly here they escaped to an island called Melita; where what signal instances of humanity they received from the hands of barbarous heathens, the following chapter fully informs us.

## CHAP. XXVIII.

AND when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. 2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast



hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6 Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly; but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said, that he was a god.

After a long and dangerous voyage, recorded in the foregoing chapter, the providence of God brought St. Paul and the rest of the prisoners to an island called Melita, where they were all courteously received by the islanders; who finding them wet and cold, made them a fire to warm and refresh them: When, behold, a viper that was in the wood, feeling the heat of the fire, leaped out upon St. Paul, and fastened on his hand: which the islanders seeing, instantly concluded that the apostle was some notorious malefactor, whom divine vengeance followed: but the apostle, (according to our Saviour's promise, Mark xvi. 11. *If ye touch any deadly thing it shall not hurt you.*) shaking off the venomous beast into the fire, without harm, the people presently changed their opinion, and took him for a god, that was come to them in the shape of a man. Here note, 1. How it pleased God by a new miracle to confirm the apostle's authority, and thereby to prepare the hearts of those barbarous people for the receiving of the gospel. God will honour his gospel, and the faithful dispensers of it, wherever they go, by preparing the hearts of the people to receive and entertain it. Note, 2. That great and manifold dangers and distresses may, and oftentimes do, befall gracious persons. No sooner is one affliction passed over and gone from them, but presently another comes on with a fresh assault. Thus here, St. Paul had no sooner escaped the shipwreck, and gets to shore, but a viper fastens upon his hand: *Many are the afflictions of the righteous.* Observe, 3. That the very light of nature suggests, even to the most barbarous heathens, that wickedness shall not go unpunished: *No doubt this man is a murderer, whom vengeance suffereth not to live.* Note, 4. That natural agents cannot act or exert their natural powers,

without the concurrence and concurrence of supernatural providence: This viper, according to its nature, did not, and could not, sting the apostle, being restrained by the overruling providence and power of God. Note, 5. That the humanity of these barbarous heathens towards those that suffered shipwreck, may justly condemn the inhumanity of them that are called Christians, towards those that are shipwrecked: How do some that live near the sea-coast rejoice at a wreck at sea, in hopes of enriching themselves with the spoils of others! The barbarous were humane here, but the humane are now barbarous. Note, 6. How prone and ready men are to draw sinful inferences from sorrowful premises; to conclude, that such a man, or such a people, are wicked, because they are wretched; great sinners, because great sufferers. This was the barbarous logic of these islanders. It had been well that it had been confined to that island: *When the barbarians saw the venomous beast on the apostle's hand, they said, No doubt this man is a murderer.* Note, 7. How mutable is the mind of man, and how inconstant are men in their esteem and opinions of men: the apostle had no sooner shook off the viper into the fire, but the barbarians change their opinions into another extreme; he whom they accounted a murderer before, they called a god now: *They changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* They are light and lavish in their applauding, as before they were rash and severe in censuring. Thus, upon changes of providence, many change their opinions of men, sometimes for the better, but commonly for the worse. Lord! help me to esteem myself only by the esteem which I have with thee. Let me never be lifted up with the applaudings, nor cast down by the despisings, of men; neither praise nor reproach are much to be accounted of, whilst we are innocent, and make thee our friend. *Question.* But why did not St. Paul, that shook off the viper from his hand, shake off the chain from his arm, and set himself at liberty? *Answer.* St. Paul was not the author, but a minister or instrument in this miracle; it was not St. Paul himself, but God by him, that wrought this miracle, Acts xix. 12. *God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul.* Now, when the deliverance of the apostle from his bonds made most for the glory of God, he was delivered; but, when his bonds would more advance the gospel, God kept him in bonds.

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. 8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. 9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island came, and were healed; 10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

Observe here, How God goes on still to honour the person and ministry of St. Paul, in the eyes and hearts of this barbarous people, by enabling him further to work miracles in this island. First, on Publius the governor's father, and then on others that were diseased in the island. Here note, 1. How great the civility of the governor of the island was towards St. Paul, entertaining him and all the company with him, even more than two hundred persons, at his own charge. And, 2. How well the governor was rewarded for his hospitable charity; his father lying sick of a fever and bloody flux, is miraculously recovered by God. As there is no duty more certainly rewarded in another world than that of charity, so is it frequently rewarded in this world. Publius was well paid by his father's recovery, for what he did for St. Paul and his company. Note, 3. The means which the apostle used for the recovery of this sick person: prayer and imposition of hands, ver. 8. *Paul prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.* Now, hereby the apostle showed that he could do nothing of himself; accordingly he applies by prayer to that God who killeth and maketh alive, and the Lord heard him. St. Paul had honoured God, and now God honours him. How grieved was the holy apostle when God's honour was sacrilegiously given to him! I doubt not but it grieved the good man more when they called him a god, than when they accounted him a murderer; here therefore he returns the honour to God by prayer, ascribing all to him; and God honours

him by making him the instrument of the miraculous cure. Note, 4. How the infinitely wise God made all things work together for his own glory: that the apostle should suffer shipwreck; that he should be cast upon an island: that he should be cast upon a barbarous island, where the name of God was not known; that a viper should fasten upon him, and not hurt him; that the governor of the island's father, and other inhabitants of the island, should at this time be sick, and miraculously cured by St. Paul. All these tender towards the promoting of God's glory, by opening an effectual door for the conversion of many souls; for during the three months that the apostle stayed there, he planted a christian church in the island, which became famous for its stedfastness in the truth. Note, 5. The proof and evidence which the islanders gave of the truth of their conversion by the apostle's ministry among them; namely, that those new converts loaded St. Paul's ship with necessities for their voyage when he went away from them. This was a real fruit of their effectual faith, as also their honouring him with many honours. The best evidence of sincere faith, is a holy fruitfulness in good works, in works of piety towards God, and works of charity towards man: *They honoured us with many honours, and when we departed they laded us with such things as were necessary.*

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. 12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. 13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: 14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. 15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii-forum, and the Three Taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

Observe here, 1. That St. Paul at the command of God, though shipwrecked

before, yet puts forth to sea again. A clear call from God, will carry on a christian cheerfully to grapple with all imaginary difficulties and dangers, without either dispute or delay. Thus did the apostle here; he enters a ship of Alexandria, sails from Malta to Syracuse in Sicily, from thence to Rhegium, in Italy, from thence to Puteoli; where they found some christians, with whom they abode seven days. Here note, How wonderfully the christian religion was spread abroad in the Italian country, yea, in and about Rome, before St. Paul's coming thither. From Puteoli the apostle passes to Rome, the chief city in Italy, the empress of the world, the seat of the Roman emperor. Behold how God bears witness to, and puts honour upon, his suffering servant; he passes to Rome, more like a conqueror than a prisoner. He is met upon the road by many eminent persons, as conquerors used to be, to congratulate their great victories; even by christians, who are called *brethren*, ver. 15. who are not ashamed of St. Paul's chain, but left their houses, and came forth to meet him, some fifty miles, others thirty; some one day's journey, others two; to congratulate his coming, and pay their respect unto him: for which favour the apostle *thanked God and took courage*. That is, he owned it as an encouragement sent from God unto him, and was greatly refreshed by their company. But how came christians so early to be found at Rome? Who converted them? St. Paul had never been there till now, and we read not of St. Peter, or any of the apostles, having been there thus early; yet St. Paul finds many christians at and about Rome. *Answer*, These brethren are thought to be converted by such as were present at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, *Acts* ii. 10. where it is expressly said, That there were *strangers of Rome then present*, when those mighty miracles were wrought there; and we may suppose that they, becoming true converts at that time, did propagate the gospel in and about Rome, according to their ability; and the blessing of God so accompanied and succeeded their endeavours, that the apostle now found some saints even in Nero's house: *Thus mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed*.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by him-

self, with a soldier that kept him. 17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together. And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans: 18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. 20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

Now is the great apostle landed and lodged a prisoner at Rome, according to the divine prediction, chap. xxiii. 11. *Be of good cheer, Paul; as thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem, so shalt thou bear witness also at Rome*. Yet observe, 1. The favour which God gave him in the sight of his enemies: he is not clapped up in the common gaol, but a sort of prisoner at large; he dwells by himself in his own hired house, with his keeper with him. This liberty was highly valued by the apostle, we may believe; not so much for his own comfort, as for the benefit and advantage of the gospel; for by this means he had an opportunity of going abroad and preaching the word of God in every place, as the providence of God gave him opportunity. Observe, 2. St. Paul is no sooner come to Rome, with desire and design, no doubt, to preach the gospel there to his countrymen the Jews in the first place; but he sends for the Jews to come to him, states his case to them, lays the matter of fact before them, and endeavours to remove all prejudice from their minds, which they might have taken up against him, and so have missed of the benefit of his ministry. From whence learn, That it is the great duty of the ministers of the gospel, prudently to prevent, if possible, or presently to remove, all prejudices, which may be taken up by their people against their persons; knowing that if they have a prejudice against their

persons, they will never relish their doctrine, nor be benefited by their ministry. Thus did the great apostle here endeavour to set himself right with his auditors the Jews, before he began to preach to them. Observe, 3. How the apostle was not ashamed of, but rather glories in, the cause for which he suffered: *For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.* As if he had said, "For preaching that Messiah who hath long been hoped and prayed for, I am come hither a prisoner; or, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, whom all true Israelites long expected and hoped for, who is now come in the flesh, to be their Redeemer, and in whom all the true Israel of God repose all their hope of salvation, and by whom they expect a joyful resurrection, *I am bound with this chain.*" Here observe, 1. The hard usage which the blessed apostle meets with from the hands of a wicked world: a chain is clapped upon him, as if he was some rogue or thief. Paul the lamb, was now a prisoner to Nero the lion. The best of men may, and oft do, suffer under the notion of the most vile and wicked persons. Observe, 2. The true cause of St. Paul's sufferings: *For the hope of Israel I am bound.* That is, for the object of Israel's hope, or the Messiah which they so long expected, and so much hoped for. Observe, 3. The publication which St. Paul makes of his sufferings here at Rome: he tells all the world, for whom, and in whose cause he now suffered. Thence learn, That sufferings for Christ and the gospel are no matter of shame, but glory: the apostle doth not blush to say, *For the hope of Israel, I wear this chain*; the shame belonged to them that clapped on the chain, not to him that wore it. Observe, 4. The end why the apostle makes known his sufferings; namely, That all the Jews now at Rome might know the true cause wherefore he suffered. St. Paul's enemies had laid heavy things to his charge, which possibly might fly as far as Rome: now although he little regarded what the wicked world said of him, yet he desired to stand right in the thoughts of the Jews here at Rome; and therefore as soon as he was come thither, he sends for them to acquaint them with the cause of his imprisonment. When good men are in a suffering condition, the devil is very industrious to defame them, and the world very ready to misrepresent them; therefore it is a duty which is owing to themselves, to vindicate their own innocence, and to set

forth the cause of their sufferings in a clear and true light. It is verily *for the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.*

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came, shewed or spake any harm of thee. 22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. 23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

Observe here, 1. The advantage which the apostle had to preach the gospel to these Jews at Rome: they assure him that they had entertained no prejudice against his person; for they had received no letters out of Judea concerning him; neither had any of their brethren that came from Judea spoken any evil of him; yea, they assure him, it was their desire to hear him preach, and to understand what he had to say for the christian religion, (which they call a sect or heresy,) that both Jews and Gentiles did generally oppose and speak against and talk hardly of. Observe, 2. How readily the apostle complies with their request in preaching to them: time and place are appointed, the people assembled. The great truth defended and approved was this, That Jesus of Nazareth was the true and promised Messiah, in whom all that desire to be saved ought to believe and trust. This argument he confirmed by testimonies out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, continuing his discourse from morning until night; so unwearied was this faithful labourer in his Lord and Master's work. Observe, 3. The different success of the word preached, and the contrary effects which it had upon its hearers: *Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.* As the same sun that softens the wax hardens the clay, so has

the gospel different effects upon those it is preached to ; there are some whom no sun will tan, no heat will warm, no influence will quicken. To some we are the savour of life unto life, to others the savour of death unto death : but, blessed be God, if we his ministers be found faithful, we shall be a sweet savour unto God, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive : 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

The obstinate infidelity and unreasonable unbelief which was found among the Jews under the apostle's preaching, was no doubt a great grief of heart unto him ; but at their departure he tells them, that they would not be persuaded that this unbelief of theirs was what the prophet Esaias had long before punctually foretold, That hearing they will not hear, and seeing they will not see ; having contracted such a wilful hardness, blindness, and deafness, as will not suffer them to hearken to any counsel which may end to their conversion and salvation. Here note, That though the present unbelief of the obstinate Jews to whom the apostle now preached, was long before foretold by the prophets of God ; yet the prophets' prediction was no cause of their unbelief, or that which laid them under an impossibility of believing ; but

the fault lay in their own obstinate wills ; with respect to which, by the just judgment of God, they were blinded and hardened. When sinners close their eyes wilfully, and say, They will not see ; it is just with God to close their eyes judicially, and say, They shall not see. *Deus non deserit nisi deserentem* ; the Jews had forsaken God, and now God forsakes them. But the apostle tells them, that upon this refusal of theirs he was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and that they would hear it, and gladly receive it, ver. 29. *The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it.* Where observe, The epithet or title given to the gospel, *The salvation of God.* 1. It is styled *salvation*, because it makes a tender and universal offer of life and salvation unto lost sinners. 2. It is called the *salvation of God*, because it is a salvation of his providing and contriving, of his revealing and discovering. It is his by way of profection and discovery ; his by way of tender and offer ; his by way of power and efficacy ; *The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles.*

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him. 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Note here, 1. The special favour indulged St. Paul, now a prisoner at Rome, with so much freedom, and without any molestation, to preach the gospel in his own hired house for two years together. Where observe, 1. Who preaches ; St. Paul a prisoner, who scarcely had liberty to hear, rarely to preach. 2. Where he preached ; even in proud, powerful, and imperious Rome, and in his own hired house there. 3. To whom he preached : *To all that came unto him.* He set open the doors of his house for all comers, excluding none from the gracious offers of salvation by a Redeemer, upon the condition of faith and obedience. 4. How long he continued his ministry at Rome ; for two whole years at that time : he would neither be allured by flatteries, nor hectoring by threatenings, to lay down his ministry, or desist from his preaching work. 5. After what manner he preached ; with all confidence, boldness, openness, and freedom, with such an undaunted courage as neither a love of life,

nor fear of death, could overcome. 6. The subject matter of his preaching: *The kingdom of God, and things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ*; not vain janglings or envious railings, but Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation by him. Lastly, with what freedom he did all this, *No man forbidding him*; neither emperor, nor senate, nor magistrate, nor soldier, nor priest, nor people, though in an heathen city, devoted to idolatry, in the least hindering or forbidding him. Where note, That Rome heathen of old was far less cruel and much more courteous to the preachers of the gospel, than Rome antichristian since has been. Then an apostle might preach two years together without molestation in his own hired house, to all comers; but now a minister of God must there have no public or private place of meeting to worship God according to his word and will, without the danger of an inquisition.

To conclude: See how impossible it was at that day to hinder the progress of the gospel; even as impossible as to hinder the sun from shining, or the wind from blowing. That God, who shut the mouths of the hungry lions, that they hurt not Daniel, did open the mouth of the apostle, that neither Nero nor the Jews could stop it; yea, after this, *he was delivered from the mouth of the*

*lion*; rescued out of Nero's hands. And God would have continued to deliver him, had not his death been more for the glory of God and his own advantage than his life, which at last was offered up a sacrifice and sweet-smelling savour, acceptable unto God though Jesus Christ.

Thus St. Luke concludes his history of St. Paul's life, without giving us any particulars of his death. He leaves him at Rome, a prisoner under Nero, where after two years' confinement, the scriptures seem to hint, that he was at liberty, and that he went about preaching the gospel and confirming the churches for some years; but an attempt to trace this apostle farther without scripture light, may be the ready way to lose ourselves. Let us therefore conclude with prayer,

*That almighty God, who through the preaching of his apostle St. Paul did cause the light of the glorious gospel to shine throughout the world, would mercifully grant that we, having his wonderful conversion and instructive example in our remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto him for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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